MARVEL
THE AVENGERS
IRON MAN
FIRST SIGN
LUKE ROSS 95
JP

EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES ARE IN DISARRAY!

In the wake of The Crossing, Thor is powerless, and Iron Man has been replaced — by himself?! But when the terrorist group Zodiac invades New York City, Captain America must attempt to assemble the Avengers once more! Plus: After a nuclear bomb is dropped on Hulk and Thor, the Avengers go on the hunt for Gamma Bombs planted across America! An arsenal of Iron Man suits attacks Tony Stark and War Machine! Madame Masque sows paranoia among the Avengers as Hercules and Deathcry leave the team! And legendary creators Mark Waid and Mike Wieringo present a super-sized anniversary tale pitting the Avengers against their greatest foes!

Collecting *Captain America (1968) #449, Thor (1966) #496, Iron Man (1968) #326-331* and *Avengers (1963) #396-400* — written by Mark Waid, William Messner-Loebs, Terry Kavanagh and Ben Raab; and illustrated by Ron Garney, Mike Deodato Jr., Jim Cheung, Dave Hoover, Marc Campos, Joe Bennett, John Statema and Mike Wieringo.

DEODATO
+
PALMER

AVENGERS/ IRON MAN

AVENGERS/IRON MAN

FIRST SIGN

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PREVIOUSLY

The time-traveling Kang, determined to avoid a looming threat, sought to create weaponry to shunt Earth out of the timestream. Revealing that he had secretly brainwashed Iron Man at some point in the past, Kang forced him to create chronographic weapons including a large Temporal Transposer, which Iron Man housed in an Arctic bunker. Kang then launched a complex and convoluted scheme using Iron Man as one of his pawns. As various people stumbled onto the plot, including the time-traveling female Yellowjacket and the Avengers' nanny Marilla, the Kang-controlled Iron Man was forced to murder them.

The Avengers soon learned of Kang's threat and battled his forces with the help of allies like Moonraker and Masque — but when Iron Man's duplicity was discovered, the armored Avenger lashed out at his teammates, grievously wounding the Wasp. Giant-Man worked desperately to save her, but in so doing accidentally mutated her into an insectoid form. The Avengers, deciding to get help from a pre-brainwashed Iron Man, used a time portal and traveled back in time to Tony Stark's teenage years. However, Kang's lieutenants followed the Avengers and attacked, killing young Tony's parents. Tony swore vengeance and journeyed back to the present with the Avengers to battle Kang.

Tony and the Avengers infiltrated Iron Man's bunker as the Temporal Transposer was beginning to activate. Tony donned a spare suit of Iron Man armor and attacked his adult counterpart, but Iron Man punched straight through Tony's chest, damaging the teenager's heart. However, with great effort, the elder Iron Man finally broke free of Kang's programming, and destroyed the Transposer — at the cost of his own life.

The Avengers saved young Tony, but he now requires components of the Iron Man armor at all times to keep his heart beating. Stranded in the present, the teenage Tony Stark must decide how to step into the shoes of his own adult self…

Meanwhile, Thor and the Enchantress began a relationship. They defeated a scientist who was using machinery to alter Yggdrasil, the Norse World-Tree, into believing that Ragnarok had come — but the two Asgardians awoke soon afterward to find that their powers and immortality had vanished. And after years of believing that his old flame, S.H.I.E.L.D. agent Sharon Carter, had died, Captain America recently learned that she was alive after all!

Get the full story in the *Avengers: The Crossing Omnibus*, *Thor: Worldengine Premiere Hardcover* and *Captain America: Operation Rebirth Premiere Hardcover!*

MARVEL
THE AVENGERS
THE CROSSING

THOR
WORLDENGINE
ELLIS • DEODATO

CAPTAIN AMERICA
OPERATION REBIRTH
WAID • GARNEY

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
Steve★Rogers
Captain America
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MARCH 1996
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STILL
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LEO
VIRGO
LIBRA
SCORPIO
SAGITTARIUS
CAPRICORN
FIRST SIGN
CARLOS PACHECO & KOBLISH 1995

TALK!
I DON'T KNOW! I SWEAR I DON'T KNOW!!
SOMEBODY KNOWS. MAYBE YOU SHOULD TRY TO POINT ME IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION-- FAST!
THESE WINDS ARE GIVING ME A COLD, AND BELIEVE ME--

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--YOU DON'T *WANT* ME TO SNEEZE.
SHARON!
FOR GOD'S SAKE, PUT HIM DOWN!
LOVE TO.

Stan Lee PRESENTS AN
AVENGERS
EVENT:
FIRST SIGN

CHAPTER ONE
I'LL TAKE MANHATTAN

MARK WAID -- Story
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SANDU FLOREA -- Pencils
DENIS RODIER, SCOTT
KOBLISH and FLOREA -- Inks
JOHN KALISZ -- Colors
MALIBU -- Computer Color
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BOB HARRAS -- Editor in Chief

I MEAN--
--GET HIM IN HERE--
--NOW!
KTANG
SEAL
CHUNT
I HAD HIM.
I'M SURE.

WE GOT INTO SHIELD HQ THROUGH MY AVENGERS I.D., SHARON-- NOT YOUR CHARM. I WANT ANSWERS, TOO.
I WAS THINKING WE COULD FIND THEM TOGETHER--WITHOUT TERRORIZING RANDOM BUREAUCRATS.
SORRY, SIR.
YOU WANT TO STICK TO THE PROGRAM?
WHY? SHIELD DIDN'T.
I WAS ONE OF THIS AGENCY'S BEST OPERATIVES. WITHOUT WARNING, THEY CUT ME LOOSE BEHIND ENEMY LINES--
--THEY TOLD YOU I WAS DEAD--
-- AND I WANT TO KNOW HOW COME. THEY OWE ME THAT MUCH.
AGREED. AND FOR THE RECORD, I'M EVERY BIT AS ANGRY ABOUT IT AS YOU ARE.
BUT WHEN YOU WANT ANSWERS AROUND THIS PLACE, YOU GO STRAIGHT TO NICK FURY. HE'LL KNOW.
I'M AFRAID NOT, ROGERS.
CONTESSA-?
NICK FURY--
--IS DEAD.

WHAT?! NICK-- GONE? FOR WHAT, THE FOURTH TIME? FORGIVE ME, CONTESSA, BUT I'VE HEARD THAT SONG AND DANCE BEFORE.
THAT OLD BUZZARD'S TOO TOUGH TO DIE. I'M NOT BUYING IT.
THEN PERHAPS YOU SHOULD LEARN TO. WE ALL MISS HIM, ROGERS... BUT IT'S FOR REAL THIS TIME...
...AND NO ONE COMES BACK FROM THE DEAD.
ALL RIGHT. IF I HAVE TO MAKE MY PEACE WITH NICK, I'LL DO IT PRIVATELY...ON MY OWN... LATER.
RIGHT NOW, SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO TO TAKE THE EDGE OFF THE WAY SHIELD TREATED US. WE WANT INFORMATION. WHY WERE WE LIED TO ABOUT EACH OTHER?
I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T CARE. BUT AS FAR AS INFORMATION GOES, I WANT IT--
--FROM SHARON. AS ACTING HEAD OF SHIELD, I'M PLACING HER UNDER HOUSE ARREST.
AS A RETURNING AGENT SHE IS TO BE DEBRIEFED. WILLINGLY...
...OR UNWILLINGLY.

GUESS *WHICH.*
LET ME *SHOW* YOU HOW *WILLINGLY* I'M READY TO--
THAP
ARREST? DEBRIEFING? I DON'T THINK THAT WILL BE *NECESSARY,* CONTESSA.
DO *YOU?*

THEY'LL BE WATCHING ME FROM HERE ON OUT.
I KNOW.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO KEEP AN EYE ON ME, YOU KNOW.
DIDN'T SAY I DID.
DIDN'T SAY.
SO WHAT NOW?
I'VE GOT LIVING QUARTERS ACROSS THE BRIDGE IN BROOKLYN.
I VOTE YOU AND I HEAD OVER AND I FIGURE OUT WHERE YOU SHOULD GO FROM HERE--
--WHAT THE--?

KZAAK
THAT LIGHT--!
SHARON?
SHARON!
A BARRIER? I CAN'T GET THROUGH! I'M TRAPPED!
NO, NOT ME.
THE WHOLE ISLAND. SOMEONE'S DROPPED A FORCE FIELD OVER ALL OF MANHATTAN--
--WITHOUT REGARD FOR WHAT OR WHO MIGHT BE IN ITS PATH!
GOOD LORD! I HEAR PEOPLE CAUGHT IN IT, SCREAMING...
HELP!
OH, GOD--HELP MEEE!
...BUT OVER THAT... SOMETHING I'VE NEVER HEARD IN NEW YORK BEFORE.
SILENCE.
THE CARS HAVE STOPPED RUNNING. THE BRIDGE TRAIN'S AT A STANDSTILL.
IT'S AS IF SOMEONE'S FLIPPED A SWITCH--
--AND TURNED OFF NEW YORK CITY!

WHAT'S *HAPPENING* HERE? *TALK* TO ME!
WE HAVE *NO IDEA!* ALL THE *LIFE-SUPPORT MACHINERY* IN OUR *AMBULANCE* SUDDENLY *SHUT DOWN!*
ALL WE KNOW FOR *SURE* IS THAT IF WE DON'T GET THIS MAN TO A HOSPITAL *SOON,* HE'S *DEAD!*
ALL RIGHT! YOU, YOU AND *YOU*--HELP THEM CARRY HIM TO *MERCY CENTRAL!* IT'S *FOUR BLOCKS BACK!* I'LL RUN *INTERFERENCE* AND--
SUPPLIES
HOLY *JEEZ!*
MAYDAY! *MAYDAY!* WE'VE LOST *POWER!*
THAT CHOPPER'S FALLIN' LIKE A *ROCK!*
I GOT A *CELLPHONE,* CAP! WE CAN CALL FOR HELP, AND--
?
CAP, IT AIN'T *WORKIN'!* *CAP?*

CAP?

WE'RE SINKING! OPEN THE DOORS!
FOR GOD'S SAKE--OPEN THE DOORS!
I'M TRYING BUT THE PRESSURE'S TOO--
KSSSH
YOU! ANY WORD ON WHAT'S GOING ON?
SEARCH US! AS NEAR AS WE CAN TELL, WHEN THAT FORCE FIELD HIT, POWER--ALL KIND OF POWER--GOT SHUT DOWN--
STATES COAST GUARD
NCC-1701
--ALL ACROSS MANHATTAN!
ELECTRICITY, FUEL ENGINES--EVEN OUR BOAT'S STRANDED!
COME ABOARD, CAP! I'LL GIVE YOU A HAND UP!
NO, THANKS. YOU TAKE CARE OF THOSE MEN.
I'LL TAKE CARE OF MANHATTAN.
ARD

GOOD THING IT'S STILL *DAYLIGHT.* THAT'LL CUT THE *PANIC* FACTOR... FOR A *WHILE.*
HOW CAN THIS *BE?* THIS IS NO SIMPLE *CON ED* FAILURE. ALL THE ENERGY IN THE *CITY'S* BEEN DRAINED.
SCRATCH THAT.
THOSE COPS ARE PINNED BY *LASER* FIRE, OF ALL THINGS--
--*AND* THEY'RE *BADLY* OUTGUNNED. WELL...
...LET'S SEE ABOUT LEVELING THE *PLAYING* FIELD A LITTLE!
POLICE
CAPTAIN AMERICA?
UNNNFFF
HNNGH

UUNNNNN...
OH, NO, NO. OF ALL THE THINGS THAT ARE BLACKING OUT AROUND HERE, YOU'RE NOT ONE OF THEM.
TALK.
YOU'RE PACKING THE ONLY TECH IN THIS CITY THAT'S OPERATING. WHY IS THAT-- AND WHO ARE YOU?
ZODIAC. I AM AN AGENT OF ZODIAC... AND THIS CITY IS OURS!
THANKS TO OUR TRANSFORMERS, WE HAVE RECHANNELED NEW YORK'S ENERGY INTO THE SURROUNDING FORCE FIELD.
SOON, IT WILL TURN NIGHT-BLACK...SEVERING THE STARS' INFLUENCE OVER OUR LIVES...
...ALLOWING US TO CHART OUR OWN DESTINY... AND TO RULE! FIRST NEW YORK... THEN, THE WORLD!
HE'S NOT LOOKING! ON MY MARK...
...READY...
...AIM...
...FIRE!
FWOOMPH

OH, GOOD, THEY'RE WILLING TO SACRIFICE THEIR OWN. NEVER A GOOD SIGN.
THE EXPLODING SQUAD CAR THREW ME CLEAR... BUT MY INFORMANT WASN'T SO LUCKY.
AND NOW THAT THEY'VE DRAWN A BEAD, THE ODDS ARE A LITTLE STEEP EVEN FOR ME.
TIME TO CALL IN THE AVENGERS!
?
OF COURSE. EVEN THE IDENTICARD TECHNOLOGY IS FROZEN, BLAST IT! IT WON'T GENERATE AN ALERT.
I'LL HAVE TO CALL THE TROOPS IN PERSONALLY!
ATTENTION, WEST UNIT! CAPTAIN AMERICA IS HEADED YOUR WAY!
DISPOSE OF HIM--

--WITH EXTREME PREJUDICE!
WHAT IS THIS--A VIDEOGAME? THEY'RE EVERYWHERE!
THIS CITY'S CRAWLING WITH SOLDIERS AROUND EVERY CORNER!
I'M ITCHING TO TAKE THEM OUT ONE BY ONE--
--BUT SKIRMISHES WON'T WIN NEW YORK ANYTHING!
THERE ARE DOZENS OF BYSTANDERS PINNED IN THE FIELD--
--AND WHO KNOWS HOW MANY HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS TRAPPED IN ELEVATORS AND SUBWAYS!
SUBWAY

THE PANIC ALONE PUTS THEM IN--
Whoops, AROUND THE CORNER...
--PUTS THEM IN DEADLY DANGER!
WE HAVE TO PUT AN END TO THIS CRISIS--
KTANG
THWAK THWAK
--AND FAST!
AVENGERS MANSION! I MADE IT-- BUT NOT WITHOUT A DOZEN SOLDIERS RIGHT ON MY HEELS!
JARVIS! CALL THE TEAM TOGETHER!
HURRY!

BUT-- THEY'RE NOT HERE!
THEY'RE ONLY NOW RETURNING FROM AN INTERNATIONAL MISSION!
THIS IS REALLY POOR TIMING, JARVIS.
I KNOW IRON MAN IS SOMEWHERE DOWNTOWN--
--AND, OF COURSE, THOR IS UPTOWN IN HIS NEW APARTMENT--BUT THE REST OF THE AVENGERS ARE OFF-ISLAND! THE MANSION IS EMPTY!
LOOK OUT! THE GUNMEN-- THEY'RE RIGHT BEHIND YOU!
I'M AWARE OF THAT, THANKS.
BRACE YOURSELF.
FOR ATTACK?
FOR IMPACT. SORRY FOR THE BOOT, MY FRIEND--
WHOOOF!
THAMP
--BUT GET INSIDE--
--AND SECURE THE PREMISES!
SLAM

UPTOWN IT IS. ZODIAC'S MEN ARE TEEMING AT STREET LEVEL.
MAYBE I CAN AVOID THEM BY RUNNING THE ROOFTOPS.
OR NOT.
THIS IS GETTING RIDICULOUS. WHEN DID I BECOME THE PIED PIPER?
NO MATTER WHICH WAY I TURN, AN ARMY OF RATS IS HOT ON MY TRAIL.
WE HAVE HIM! WE'VE TRIANGULATED HIS PATH PERFECTLY! HE'S HEADED FOR THIS VERY BUILDING!
NORTH UNIT TO CENTRAL CONTROL! LIBERTY IS IN OUR SIGHTS!
ON THREE! ONE...TWO...
--HUH?

TWENTY-TWO...
TWENTY-ONE...
...TWENTY!
SORRY ABOUT THIS, OLD SPORT... BUT UP...
...WE...
KSSH
...GO!

CAPTAIN?
WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
YOU TELL ME. YOUR SUIT... YOUR VOICE...
...IS THAT THE ENCHANTRESS?
TELL ME I HAVE THE RIGHT ADDRESS.
I AM, INDEED, THE THOR YOU KNOW, MY FRIEND... IN BODY AND SPIRIT, AT LEAST.
THE ENCHANTRESS IS...
...WE... WE ARE...
I BELIEVE THE PHRASE IS "AN ITEM"... AND THAT'S NO ONE'S CONCERN. OBVIOUSLY THE CAPTAIN IS HERE WITH SOME URGENCY. LET'S NOT CHAT.
TO USE THE VERNACULAR, CAN WE CUT TO THE CHASE?
WELL PUT.
THERE HE IS!
SURROUND HIM!

THEY WERE IN *PURSUIT?*
YOU BROUGHT THEM *HERE?!*
I HAD NO *CHOICE.* I'M COUNTING ON *YOU* TO PUT THAT *MAGIC HAMMER* TO WORK.
TORNADO THESE GUYS OUT OF HERE AND WE'RE *SAFE. GO!*
WOULD THAT I *COULD.* THE *HAMMER*-- IT IS MAGIC *NO LONGER.*
WHAT?
CONTINUED NEXT WEEK IN THOR #496.

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THOR®
MIKE DEODATO JR.

[redacted]

Stan Lee Presents Thor in
DOIN' THE ZODIAC RAG
AN AVENGERS EVENT
FIRST SIGN PART TWO
VERY OFTEN THE HARDEST THING TO EXPLAIN TO YOUR FRIENDS IS THAT YOU'VE CHANGED.
AND WHEN YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND THE CHANGE YOURSELF, IT CAN BE NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE.
MY ASSUMPTION IS THAT THIS IS SOME UNEXPECTED SIDE EFFECT OF THE DAMAGE INFLICTED 'PON THE WORLD TREE, YGGDRASIL, DAYS AGO.*
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU'RE NOT A GOD?!!
*HAVOC CAUSED BY A DERANGED SCIENTIST CALLED PRYCE. --DERANGED RALF
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I HEAR THE GASP FROM AMORA. CAPTAIN AMERICA LED THESE ASSASSINS HERE, THINKING I COULD DEAL WITH THEM.
MY LAST THOUGHT AS I SEE THE GLOATING TRIUMPH IN THEIR EYES, AND PREPARE TO HURL MJOLNIR ONE FINAL TIME...
...IS THAT MY PAST ADVENTURING HAS CAUGHT UP TO ME AND BROUGHT DEATH TO MY BELOVED IN HER HOUSE.
CLIK!
BUT THE ENCHANTRESS AND I ARE MORTALS, CUT OFF COMPLETELY FROM ASGARD.
WHIRRRRRRRRRR
CLANK!
CLANK!
GET DOWN!
BRRKRRADAAAAAA
BRAKABRAKABRAM
I HAD FORGOTTEN THAT DEATH IS AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE OF THE ENCHANTRESS.
THUNK

WHAT ARE THESE THINGS?
RUBBER BULLETS. FILLED WITH A POWERFUL *HEART* RELAXANT. RELATIVELY *NON-FATAL*.
RELATIVELY?
WHY, YES. I HARDLY WANTED TO REPLACE MY ENTIRE *STAFF* EVERY TIME MY SANCTUM WAS INVADED.
BESIDES, I ALWAYS NEEDED TO QUESTION THE SURVIVORS AFTERWARD.
AFTER ALL, *KNOWLEDGE* IS *POWER*.
DO YOU MEAN *TORTURE*, AMORA?
I PREFER TO THINK OF IT AS *INQUIRY* WITH AN *ATTITUDE*.

CLIK! CLIK!
Huh.
BUT--
--THE GUNS *SHOULD'VE* FIRED FOR A FULL *TEN MINUTES*. THEY STOPPED AFTER *TWO*.
NOTHING WORKS. IT CAN'T BE A *POWER FAILURE*. I HAVE MY OWN *SHIELDED* GENERATOR IN THE BASEMENT.
Okay. THERE'S AN INDESTRUCTIBLE, INVISIBLE SHIELD OVER MANHATTAN. IT'S SOPPING UP ALL THE POWER IN THE CITY. WE CAN'T GET *OUT*--
--BUT THESE ASSASSINS ARE GETTING IN *SOMEWHERE*. AND, PAL, IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S JUST YOU AND ME TO STOP 'EM...
KNOCK KNOCK
Uh... HOWDY, NEIGHBORS!
REMEMBER ME, PHILLIP FLEMING... THE *LANDLORD?*
ANY IDEA WHY THE *WORLD* IS *ENDING?*

Um... Mr. FLEMING. WE'VE HAD A SMALL *PROBLEM* IN HERE. PERHAPS WE CAN SPEAK IN THE *HALL*...?
Oh, SURE, GUY. NO PROBLEMO.
Err... WHAT HAPPENED TO ALL THE GUYS IN THERE?
BAD THINGS. THEY ARE PART OF THE *VILLAINY* TRYING TO TAKE OVER THIS CITY.
Ah-ha! THAT EXPLAINS THE *SIRENS* AND STUFF. AND ALL THE TENANTS CALLING TO SAY THEIR *WINDOWS* HAVE BEEN SHOT OUT!
SO THE AVENGERS ARE ON *TOP* OF THIS? WE'RE ALL *SAFE* NOW?
TELL YOUR TENANTS TO STAY *INDOORS* AND *AWAY* FROM THE WINDOWS. WE'RE DEALING WITH THIS SITUATION AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.
AS SOON AS WE DISCOVER...
THESE *GENTLEFOLK* ALL ENTERED NEW YORK THROUGH A *DIMENSIONAL PORTAL* IN A DESERTED SUBWAY STATION.
IT'S ON 57th STREET, TEN BLOCKS DUE *EAST* FROM HERE.
HOW DID YOU--?
ONE OF THE MALEFACTORS *AWOKE*, AND OVERCOME BY *REMORSE*, CHOSE TO REVEAL *EVERYTHING* HE KNEW. HE *BEGGED* ME TO TELL YOU.
GO AND SAVE THE CITY, BELOVED. I'LL STAY HERE, *GUARD* OUR PRISONERS AND PROTECT THIS *BUILDING*.
DO NOT *FORGET* ME.

FORGET HER! AS IF I EVER COULD!
SO. IT'S YOU AND THE *ENCHANTRESS?* DO YOU *TRUST* HER?
SHE *SAVED* ME WHEN MY LIFE WAS OVER. AND SHE'S NEVER *LIED* TO ME.
BORI'S *BLOOD!*
"TEN BLOCKS STRAIGHT *EAST?*" THROUGH THAT?
LAMMABLAMMABLAMMA
TWAK
I GUESS THIS PUTS THE KIBOSH ON TAKING A *TAXI!*
CAPTAIN!
HE IS STUNNED. AND AT LEAST TWO FOE-MEN FIRE AT US FROM ABOVE.
PCHOW
PCHOW
PTANG
ONLY HIS UNBREAKABLE SHIELD CAN SAVE US BOTH!

BLAMBLAMBLAMBLAMBLAM
THEY COME AT ME IN A MAD WAVE! MOST CRIMINALS HAVE A PLAN, BUT THESE SEEM CONTENT TO CAUSE TERROR AND CHAOS!
WITHOUT MY GODHOOD, I HAVE ONLY THE STRENGTH IN MY BACK AND THE WEIGHT OF MJOLNIR TO PROTECT ME.
WHOMP
THWAK
THEY SUFFICE.
NO MATTER HOW WELL I FIGHT, THE SNIPERS WILL STILL GET ME...
...UNLESS I GET THEM FIRST!
CHUDD
WHAM
WHAK
CRAKK CRAKK
BANGG BANGG BANGG
TWANG
BRAK
YES!
SKATTERR
NO!

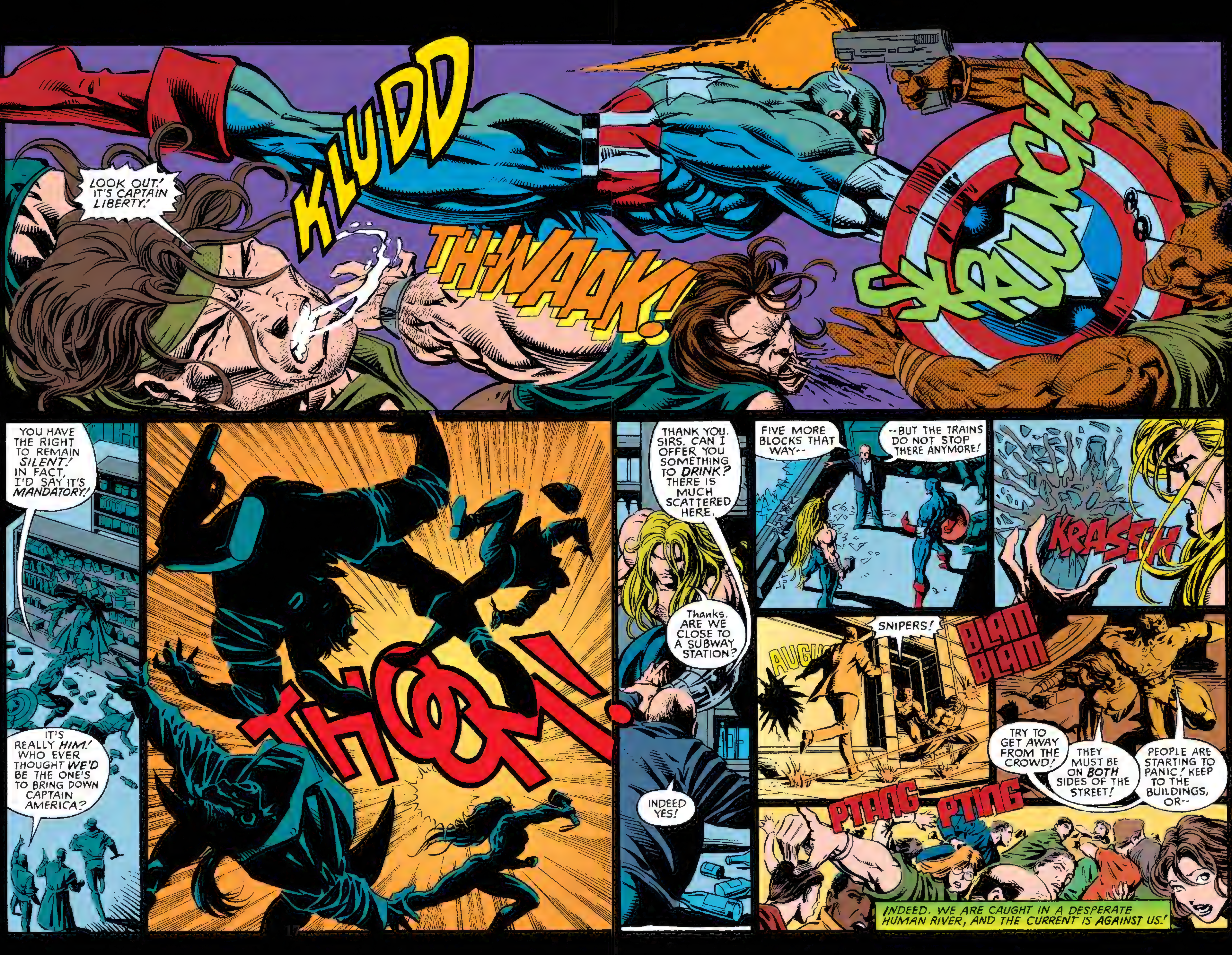
Umm... ACTUALLY, OLD FRIEND, THE SHIELD WAS SUPPOSED TO COME BACK!
I KNOW. I'M TOO USED TO THE MYSTICAL RETURNS OF MY OWN HAMMER!
DON'T GIVE IT ANOTHER THOUGHT. YOU DID GREAT! WE'LL JUST GET IT BACK!
THEY WON'T EXPECT THIS!
TRUE. A SUICIDAL ASSAULT UPON THE HIGH GROUND IS PROBABLY NOT THE STRATEGY THEY ARE CONTEMPLATING...
...JUST AS NEITHER OF US HAD COUNTED UPON THE HYSTERICAL REACTION OF THE CROWD.
HELP US!
SAVE US!
GET THEM!
YEAH! THEY'RE PART OF IT!
GIVE US BACK OUR POWER!
BUT I CAN NO MORE EXPECT THE CAPTAIN TO GO WITHOUT HIS SHIELD THAN TO WALK WITHOUT ONE OF HIS LEGS!
SO WE HAVE TO TRY, AND SURTUR TAKE THE HINDMOST!
BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM
BLAM BLAM BLAM
AAAAAAAA
WHOOSSH!
BRAK!
AS ALWAYS, LITTLE, EVIL MEN UNDERESTIMATE CAP...
...TO THEIR SORROW!
KRAAKT
CAP IS EVEN MORE RECKLESS THAN USUAL. IN SOME PART OF HIS SOUL HE STILL BELIEVES, I THINK, THAT I AM AN IMMORTAL, CAPABLE OF BACKING HIM UP... NO MATTER WHAT.
SO I MUST IGNORE PAIN AND EXHAUSTION AND BE THAT FIGURE, OR DIE IN THE TRYING!

THEY FIGHT WITH THE ENDLESS ENERGY OF FANATICS. STILL NOT USED TO HUMAN STRENGTH. A MONTH AGO I WOULD HAVE SWATTED THEM ASIDE LIKE GNATS.
CAP SMASHES THEM AWAY FROM ME AS HE WOULD HAVE IN THE OLD DAYS.
I MUST REMEMBER TO ASK HIM NOT TO DO THAT.
I THINK HE JUST CRACKED MY RIB.
KROOK
KRAK
YOU'RE DOING PRETTY WELL FOR A GUY WHO ISN'T A GOD ANYMORE.
THOD
IF WE STAY UP HERE AND KEEP MOVING, WE MIGHT AVOID ANY MORE FIRE-FIGHTS!
SO... IT'S REALLY YOU AND THE ENCHANTRESS?

I SAY NOTHING.
CAP WASN'T REALLY ASKING ANYWAY.
HOW LUCKY DO WE FEEL TODAY, PAL?
AND I HAVE NO WAY TO EXPLAIN THE SOUL-MAGNETISM THAT DRAWS ME TO AMORA.
I'M NOT SURE I CAN COMPLETELY EXPLAIN IT-- EVEN TO MYSELF.
Umm, I DIDN'T MEAN THAT TO SOUND--
HELP!!
HELP!!
A FIRE.
FIRES, ESPECIALLY IN OLD BUILDINGS, ARE TREACHEROUS THINGS.
LUCKY ENOUGH, I GUESS.
IF WE STAY TO FIGHT IT, WE LOSE TIME AND WE MAY LOSE OUR LIVES.
AND WITHOUT OUR AID, THE CITY COULD DIE.
YET WITHOUT US, THAT WOMAN AND HER CHILDREN WILL SURELY FRY IN A CAGE MEANT TO PRESERVE THEM FROM CRIME.

THE IMPORTANT THING NOW IS SPEED.
THERE IS NO NEED FOR WORDS BETWEEN US. WE HAVE FOUGHT SIDE BY SIDE TOO LONG.
WE DON'T REMIND EACH OTHER THAT THE BUILDING WALLS ARE BLISTERINGLY HOT OR THAT WE HAVE ONLY A FEW MOMENTS BEFORE THE WHOLE THING CAVES IN ON US.
WE ONLY WORK.
I CAN HEAR CAP GRUNT NEXT TO ME. I THINK HE HURT HIS SHOULDER SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY. MY SIDE IS KILLING ME.
SKRAKT

LAST ONE. BETTER RUN-- WE'RE ABOUT TO LOSE THIS *WALL!*
VVVWOOORRSSHHH!
DO YOU HAVE SOMEWHERE TO STAY?
NOT REALLY.
BUT, OF COURSE, WE HAVE TO LEAVE ANYWAY, WITH THE PROMISE TO RETURN IF WE SURVIVE THE NIGHT.
WE BATTLE OUR WAY UP THREE MORE BLOCKS, AS THE TRAPPINGS OF CIVILIZATION ARE STRIPPED AWAY BY THE DARKNESS AND FEAR IT BRINGS.
THEY'RE COMING!
LET US BY!
HELP!
MURDERERS!
THIS STORE'S PART OF *OUR* TURF NOW! KEEP BACK OR WE *SPLATTER* EVERYBODY!
I'M NOT ABOUT TO LET THAT SCUM HURT ANYBODY!
WHACK!
'TIS THE NATURE OF HEROISM, MY FRIEND.


LOOK OUT! IT'S CAPTAIN LIBERTY!
KLUDD
THWAAK!
SKRUNCH
YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN *SILENT!* IN FACT, I'D SAY IT'S *MANDATORY!*
IT'S REALLY *HIM!* WHO EVER THOUGHT *WE'D* BE THE ONE'S TO BRING DOWN CAPTAIN AMERICA?
THOOM!
THANK YOU, SIRS. CAN I OFFER YOU SOMETHING TO *DRINK?* THERE IS MUCH SCATTERED HERE.
Thanks. ARE WE CLOSE TO A SUBWAY STATION?
INDEED YES!
FIVE MORE BLOCKS THAT WAY--
--BUT THE TRAINS DO NOT STOP THERE ANYMORE!
KRASSH
SNIPERS!
BLAM BLAM
TRY TO GET AWAY FROM THE CROWD!
THEY MUST BE ON *BOTH* SIDES OF THE STREET!
PEOPLE ARE STARTING TO PANIC! KEEP TO THE BUILDINGS, OR--
PTANG
PTING
INDEED. WE ARE CAUGHT IN A DESPERATE HUMAN RIVER, AND THE CURRENT IS AGAINST US!

ABOVE US EVEN THE STARS WINK OUT, AS THEIR LIGHT-ENERGY IS ABSORBED BY THE GLOBE...
...AND DARKNESS CLOSES OVER US...

EMIR
I... I THINK... IT'S OVER.
HE'S RIGHT. THERE ARE NO MORE FIRES AND THE RIOTING HASN'T SPREAD INTO THIS AREA FOR SOME REASON.
IF I CAN JUST REST FOR A COUPLE OF MINUTES, I THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO GO ON.
TAKE ALL THE TIME YOU NEED, PAL. I'D BE WORTH ZERO IN A TUSSLE RIGHT NOW.
NO. THEY GOT *AHEAD* OF US SOMEHOW.
IT'S AN... AMBUSH. YOU... BREAK TO THE RIGHT... I'LL TRY TO...
NO NEED TO RUN, GENTLEMEN. THIS BLOCK AND THE NEXT ONE ARE *SECURED*. YOU'RE *SAFE*.
BUT *HOW?* THERE ARE ZODIAC KILLERS *EVERYWHERE*. IT'S ALMOST *PITCH DARK!* YOU'D HAVE TO BE ABLE TO SEE IN ABSOLUTE--
HEPBURN SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

SO THE BAD GUYS ARE CALLED "ZODIACS," huh? I'LL BET THEY HAVE NIFTY UNIFORMS WITH CHEESY LITTLE EMBLEMS ON 'EM, TOO, RIGHT?
A BUNCH OF THEM TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE SCHOOL, TO USE AS A SNIPER'S NEST. I GUESS THEY THOUGHT WE WOULDN'T BE MUCH TROUBLE.
THEIR NIGHT SCOPE GOGGLES OR WHATEVER DON'T SEEM TO BE REAL EFFECTIVE. THEY WEREN'T THAT HARD TO AMBUSH.
LOOK, IF YOU GUYS WANT SOMETHING TO EAT OR SOME SACK TIME...
WHO ARE YOU GUYS, ANYWAY, COPS?
CAPTAIN AMERICA.
THOR.
LORNA, WE'RE TRYING TO REACH AN ABANDONED SUBWAY STATION SOMEWHERE CLOSE TO HERE...
YEAH, IT'S TWO BLOCKS FROM HERE, BUT YOU'LL GET KILLED IF YOU GO STREET LEVEL. THERE'S A WAY FROM THE BASEMENT OF THE SCHOOL.
HOW...?
SOME OF US, Y'KNOW... LIKE TO GO THERE FOR A LITTLE... ROMANTIC PRIVACY.
Okay, LISTEN--
NO... REALLY?
COOL! I'M LORNA NICHOLS.
"--THIS WHOLE AREA IS SHOT THROUGH WITH ABANDONED STEAM HEAT TUNNELS. FROM OUR BASEMENT, YOU TAKE THE PASSAGE THAT BRANCHES LEFT, THEN TAKE A RIGHT THROUGH A TUNNEL WITH A LOT OF CABLES IN IT, AND YOU'RE THERE.
Oh, MAN...!

THROW DOWN YOUR *WEAPONS* AND LIE FACE DOWN ON THE FLOOR. DO IT NOW!
Ahem...
THERE *IS* AN ADVANTAGE TO HAVING A *DECENT* REPUTATION.
LET'S *ACE* THIS PORTAL AND GO HOME!
DO YOU HAVE A *CLUE* AS TO HOW WE *TURN OFF* OR *BLOW* IT UP... OR DO WHATEVER IT WAS WE *THOUGHT* WE WERE GOING TO DO WITH IT?
NO. I WAS HOPING *YOU* DID.
TDRILLLLL
THIS CAN'T BE GOOD...!
SHOOOOOOOMMMM
BORI'S BLOOD!
ANOTHER TRANSPORTAL!
TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK IN *IRON MAN #326!*

THOR
YGGDRASIL
RALPH MACCHIO
WARRIOR
MATT IDELSON
JR. WARRIOR
c/o MARVEL COMICS 387 PARK AVE. S. NEW YORK, NY, 10016
ADDRESSES WITHHELD BY REQUEST

Dear Thorians,

At last! I've waited years for this! My all time favorite comic is finally getting the same high profile, big-name talent consideration as other Marvel Silver Age stars like Spider-Man, the Hulk, and the X-Men. Too often, it seems, when it came time to distribute the talent at Marvel, Thor's drawn the short straw. This does not include Roy Thomas and M.C. Wyman, however. They did a great job, but they didn't really shake things up.

That's why I really like what Warren Ellis is doing, and there are simply no words worthy to describe Mike Deodato's art. Thor has been in need of a major, real revamping for a long time. Other creative teams have only played with the idea, but it's clear that the new guys are serious!

I can only hope the changes are permanent – especially where Thor and the Enchantress are concerned. Make their relationship something they both want, though; she doesn't need to control or manipulate him. That's been done already. No disrespect to Sif (whom I adore and hope to continue to see in these pages), but, done properly, Thor and Enchantress will make an extremely interesting couple. Make it last.

Let me tell you, I couldn't believe some of the things I saw in issue 491. Mighty Thor, who gets my vote as the most powerful hero in all of comics, reduced to a scrawny shade of himself? Actually dying? And Big Daddy Odin happy about it? I know a lot of people will gripe, but Odin's attitude kinda makes sense. More often than not, Odin's a jerk but Thor's been awfully uppity around his dad lately. Odin's reaction to the news of his son's impending demise only underscores his jerkdom.

The thunder god showed true grit in refusing to die, though. His heart stopped beating, and he wouldn't quit. Great stuff.

One request: Please do away with all the imitation thunder gods! There's Beta Ray Bill, Dargo, Thunderstrike, and Red Norvell. Impostors all! The one true Thor should stomp all these pretenders into oblivion.

I also wish something could be done about the "Thors" appearing in other publishers' comics. I know their creators wouldn't admit it, but their versions of Thor are more a ripoff of Marvel's than an interpretation of the mythological figure.

I heard rumors that Wonder Woman's old team, William Messner-Loebs along with Deodato were going to be reunited on Thor. For me, that's a dream come true. When reading Wonder Woman, I often found myself wishing this team was producing THOR. Keep up the great work!

Garrett Reed
San Antonio, TX

As you know by now, Garrett, the so-called "pretender" Thors have been all but wiped out by that gullible world-tree, Yggdrasil. Beta Ray Bill was laid low in Asgard, Thunderstrike was of course already dead, and Dargo, being from the future, may have had his pre-existence wiped out by the tree. As for Red Norvell, he was recognized by Yggdrasil as the one Thor in Asgard required for Ragnorok to occur (thanks to Odin), so he continues to be living happily in Asgard – or is he?

Dear Thor-Makers,

THOR has held the number one spot in my mind since the early 70's when I started collecting Marvel Comics. But since issue #460, I had been downright angered by the lackluster direction of my favorite hero. Simply out of obligation to keep my THOR collection complete, I would buy one boring book after another, hoping...yes hoping for something to develop that was interesting. When I found out that Warren Ellis and Mike Deodato were taking over as the new creative team for THOR, I called my local comic shop every day until I finally got a copy of issue 491. I'm happy...yes, very happy! I never realized how much I care about this comic book; but I guess I do if I hound my comic book store until THOR arrives and I take the time to write and express to you my 100% approval!! Awesome art! Now that's the way Thor should look majestic and powerful even when he's sick! And Warren is making THOR much more interesting and three dimensional instead of some blond haired brute that can't think for himself. You're definitely on the right track. Warren and Mike are exactly what THOR needs...and deserves!!

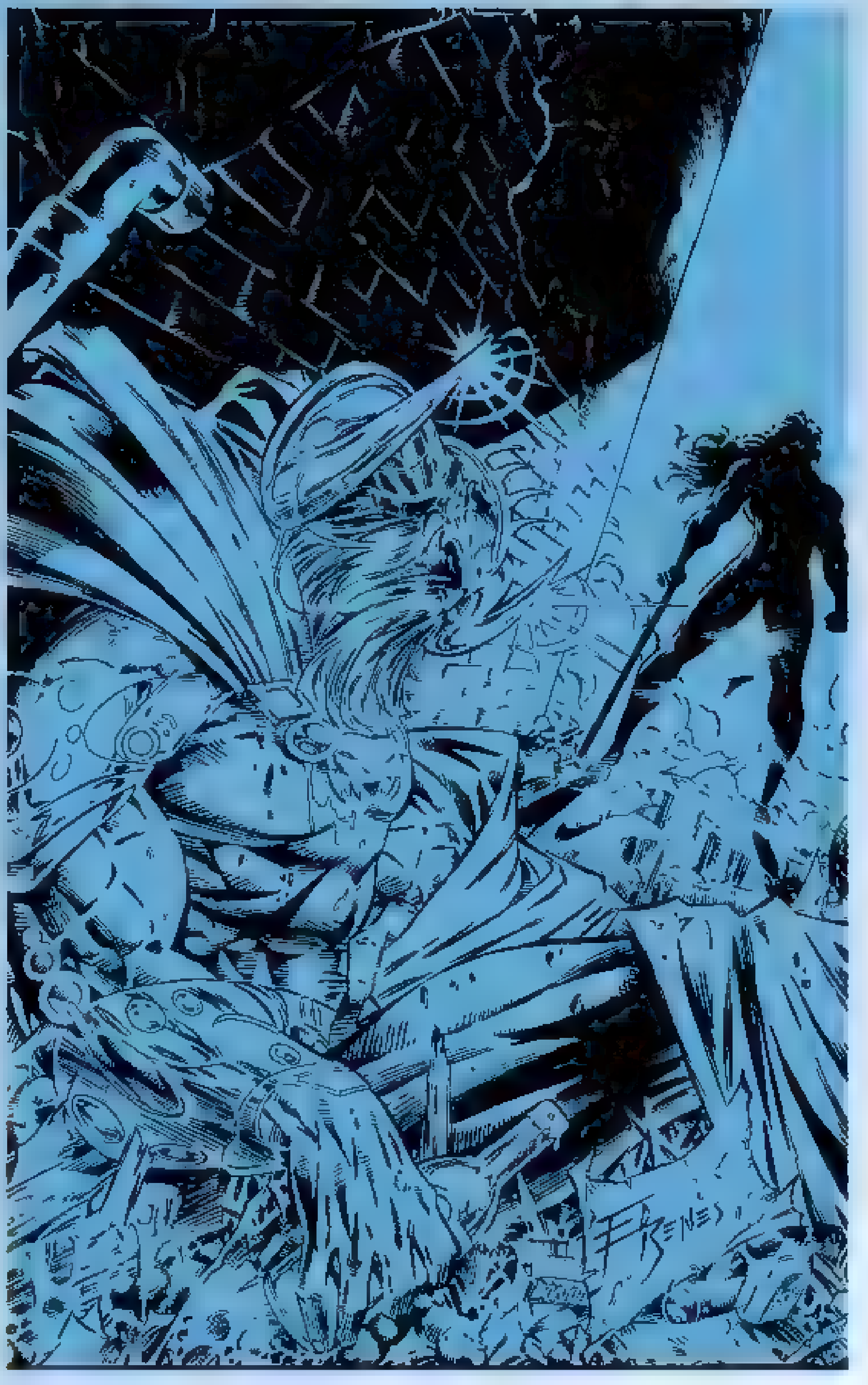
Kelly Leavitt
3912 Lakeside Ct.
Homer, AK 99603

And now, what better way to close than with a letter so succinct, so precise in its message that one couldn't possibly confuse the issue?

Dear Ralph and Matt,

Yes!!! Yes, yes!!!!!! I like it!!!

John Stottermyer
421 5th. St.
New York, NY 10003



NEXT ISSUE

Who's that regal bum in the alley? Why, it's Odin, king of the gods, of course! So what's he doing there, anyway, and does Thor have enough of that Valentine's spirit to help the old man out? Find out in our next heart-wrenching installment of AS THE HAMMER SPINS. (Brought to you by Messner-Loebs and Deodato, makers of fine consumables!)

MARVEL
UNIVERSE
ISSUE 326
MARCH
1996
THE INVINCIBLE
IRON MAN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
the second coming of
TONY STARK!
FIRST SIGN

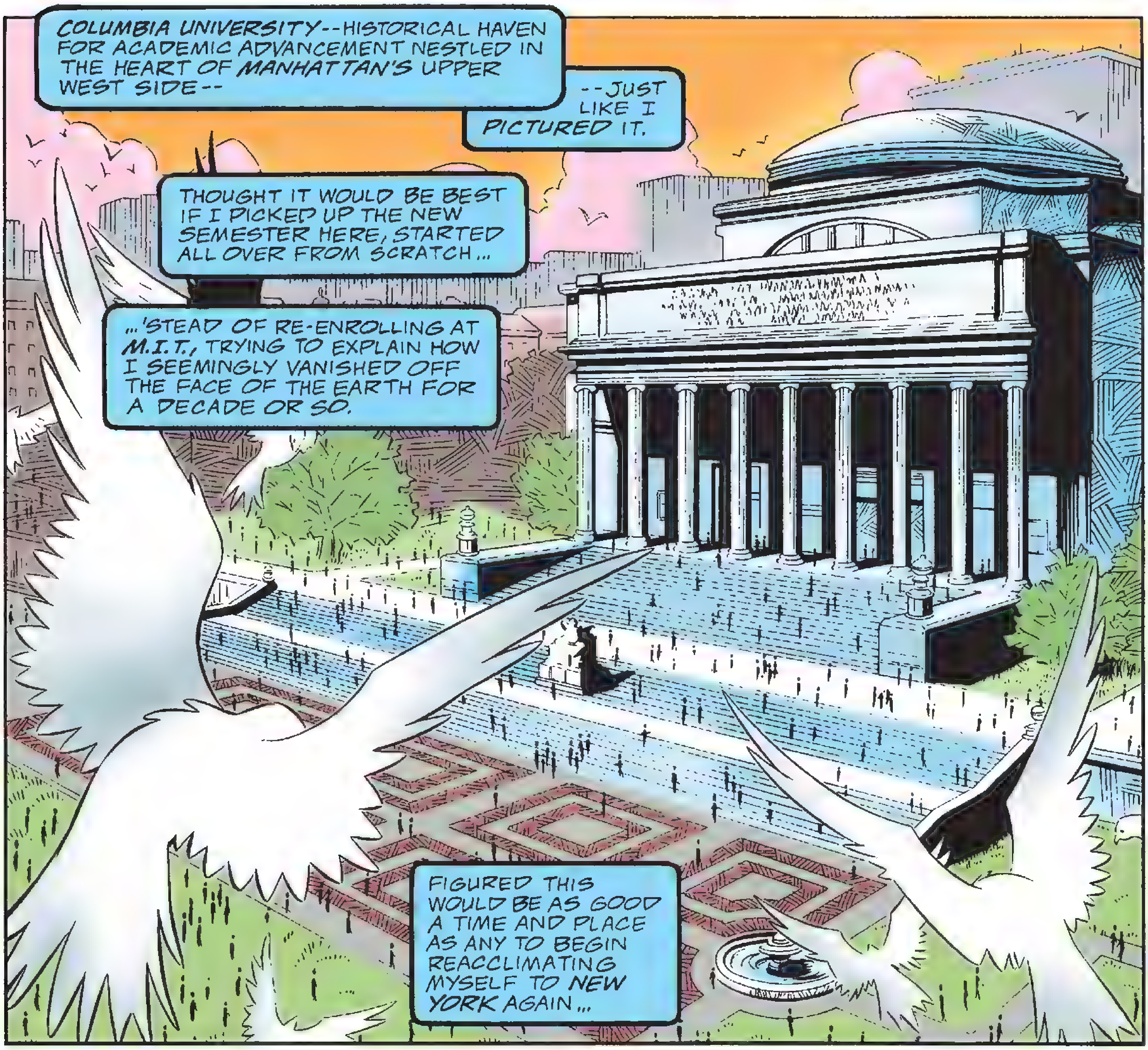
[redacted]

A TEENAGER REBORN INTO A MAN'S WORLD — IRON MAN'S WORLD — YOUNG *TONY STARK* BOLDLY FACES HIS UNCERTAIN *FUTURE* ONE STEP AT A TIME. WITH HEART DAMAGED AND SOUL SHAKEN BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF TOMORROW'S DARK POSSIBILITIES, TONY'S GREATEST ASSET — AND ONLY HOPE — REMAINS HIS *BRILLIANT MIND*. STAN LEE PRESENTS. . .IRON MAN!

FIRST SIGN PART 3 OF 4

BURN OUT

TERRY KAVANAGH WRITER
JIMMY CHEUNG · HECTOR COLLAZO · STEVE ELLIS PENCILERS
MARK McKENNA · ANDY LANNING · STEVE MONCUSE INKERS
JOHN KALISZ COLORS
PHIL FELIX LETTERS
NEL YOMTOV EDITOR
BOB HARRAS CHIEF
COMPUTER COLOR BY MALIBU


COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY--HISTORICAL HAVEN FOR ACADEMIC ADVANCEMENT NESTLED IN THE HEART OF *MANHATTAN'S* UPPER WEST SIDE--
--JUST LIKE I *PICTURED* IT.
THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BEST IF I PICKED UP THE NEW SEMESTER HERE, STARTED ALL OVER FROM SCRATCH...
...'STEAD OF RE-ENROLLING AT *M.I.T.*, TRYING TO EXPLAIN HOW I SEEMINGLY VANISHED OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH FOR A DECADE OR SO.
FIGURED THIS WOULD BE AS GOOD A TIME AND PLACE AS ANY TO BEGIN REACCLIMATING MYSELF TO *NEW YORK* AGAIN...

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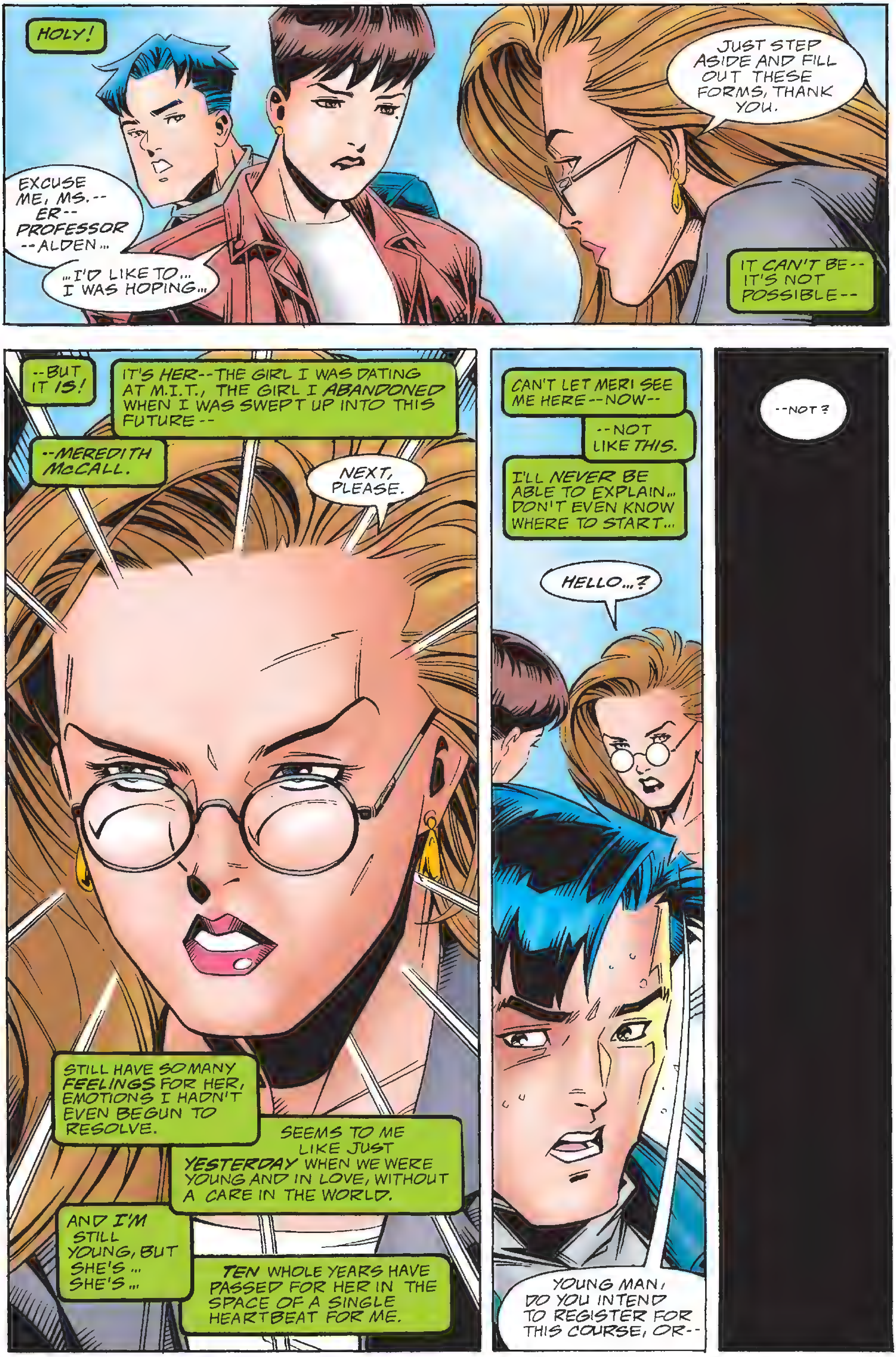
...'CEPT I'M MORE *LOST* THAN *EVER*.
I KNOW *JARVIS* AGREED WITH MY DECISION--JUST AS HAPPY AS ME TO HAVE A FAMILIAR FACE AROUND, I SUPPOSE--
--AND I DON'T THINK THE OTHER *AVENGERS* KNEW WHERE TO START WITH ME.
SO HERE I AM--*TONY STARK*, SO-CALLED CHILD PRODIGY--JUST TRYING TO PUT ONE FOOT IN FRONT OF THE OTHER, TAKING ONE STEP AT A TIME.
NOT EXACTLY NERVOUS ABOUT *SCHOOL* ITSELF--NEVER *WAS*, REALLY--
--IT'S JUST THE *REST* OF THIS BRAVE NEW WORLD THAT'S GOT ME SHAKING IN MY BOOTS.
AND NOW IT'S TIME TO *FACE* FACTS, ACCEPT THE UGLY TRUTH ONCE AND FOR ALL.
THIS PARTICULAR BOY-GENIUS CAN DECIPHER A COMPLEX CIRCUIT-BOARD EASILY ENOUGH, INTERPRET AN *ENGINEERING* SCHEMATIC WITH A GLANCE...
...BUT I NEVER COULD READ A *MAP*.
GUESS I'D BETTER BITE THE BULLET AND ASK FOR DIRECTIONS.
'SIDES, IT'S AS GOOD A WAY AS ANY TO *MEET* NEW PEOPLE. AND MAKING FRIENDS NEVER KILLED ANY--
LOOK OUT!

WHOA--!
RUNAWAY FRISBEE...
...HEADS UP BEHI--
WOK
UHFF...
SORRY ABOUT THAT, PAL. I TRIED TO WARN YOU, BUT--
PHYSICS
NO PROBLEM, MY FAULT. I WAS TOO WRAPPED UP IN THIS NEW--
BIO-MOLECULAR TEXT BY DR. LANG? WHERE CAN I GET MY HANDS ON A COPY OF THAT?
CAMPUS BOOKSTORE, THIRD ROW, TOP SHELF.
I'M CHAP WALTERS.
TONY STARK.
NO KIDDING...? ANY RELATION TO THE TONY STARK?
NONE THAT I KNOW OF.
THINK I COULD GET SOME ADVICE ABOUT THE SCIENCE DEPARTMENT HERE? REQUIRED COURSES, BEST TEACHERS, WHERE TO FIND 'EM, THE USUAL...
SURE, JUST FOLLOW ME TO REGISTRATION...
WHATEVER YOU DO, MS. ALDEN'S CLASS...
...IS NOT TO BE MISSED...

HEY, WAIT UP!
WHAT'S *WRONG*, CHAP...?!
WHAT'D I--
OH.
HA HA HA HA HA
CHECK IT OUT, *KRIS.*
LOOKS LIKE MY LI'L *BENJO'S* LOSIN' HIS GOLDEN TOUCH...
DON'T BLAME ME, *TRACE.*
THE DISCUS-THROW AIN'T EXACTLY MY SPORT O' *CHOICE*, YOU KNOW.
VERY FUNNY, GUYS.
ANYBODY EVER TELL YOU KIDDIES NOT TO PLAY WITH THE BIG BOYS--
--'TIL YOU KNOW HOW TO *USE* THE EQUIPMENT?
DOUBT I MADE ANY IMPRESSION ON THE LOCAL JOCK-SQUAD. JUST HOPE I CAN STILL *CATCH* UP WITH C.W. AT...

...REGISTRATION.
GOT TO GET INTO CALC 3 THIS PERIOD
LOOKING FOR ANOTHER ELECTIVE
NEED FOURTEEN MORE CREDITS
HEARD ABOUT THE GAMMA-DELTA BUST
YEAH, RIGHT.
SUPPOSE I'M LUCKY HE TOLD ME ABOUT PROFESSOR ALDEN'S SEMINAR 'FORE BLOWING ME OFF.
LUCKIER STILL, NOBODY ELSE SEEMS TO RECOGNIZE THIS HOT PICK JUST YET.
LINE FOR THAT OTHER CHEMO-ELECTRONICS COURSE MUST BE FIVE TIMES LONGER THAN--
PITY THOSE POOR SUCKERS
ALDEN'S A REAL B
WOULDN'T BE CAUGHT DEAD
WAIT A MINUTE.
THEY CAN'T BE TALKING 'BOUT THIS CLASS, CAN THEY?
MAYBE I'D BETTER--
HO, HOT-SHOT...
...YOU'RE IN THE WRONG QUEUE.
BUT I WANTED--
YOU AGAIN!?
KRIS, RIGHT?
DEGANN. KRIS DEGANN.
TONY STARK.
TRULY...? ANY RELATION TO--

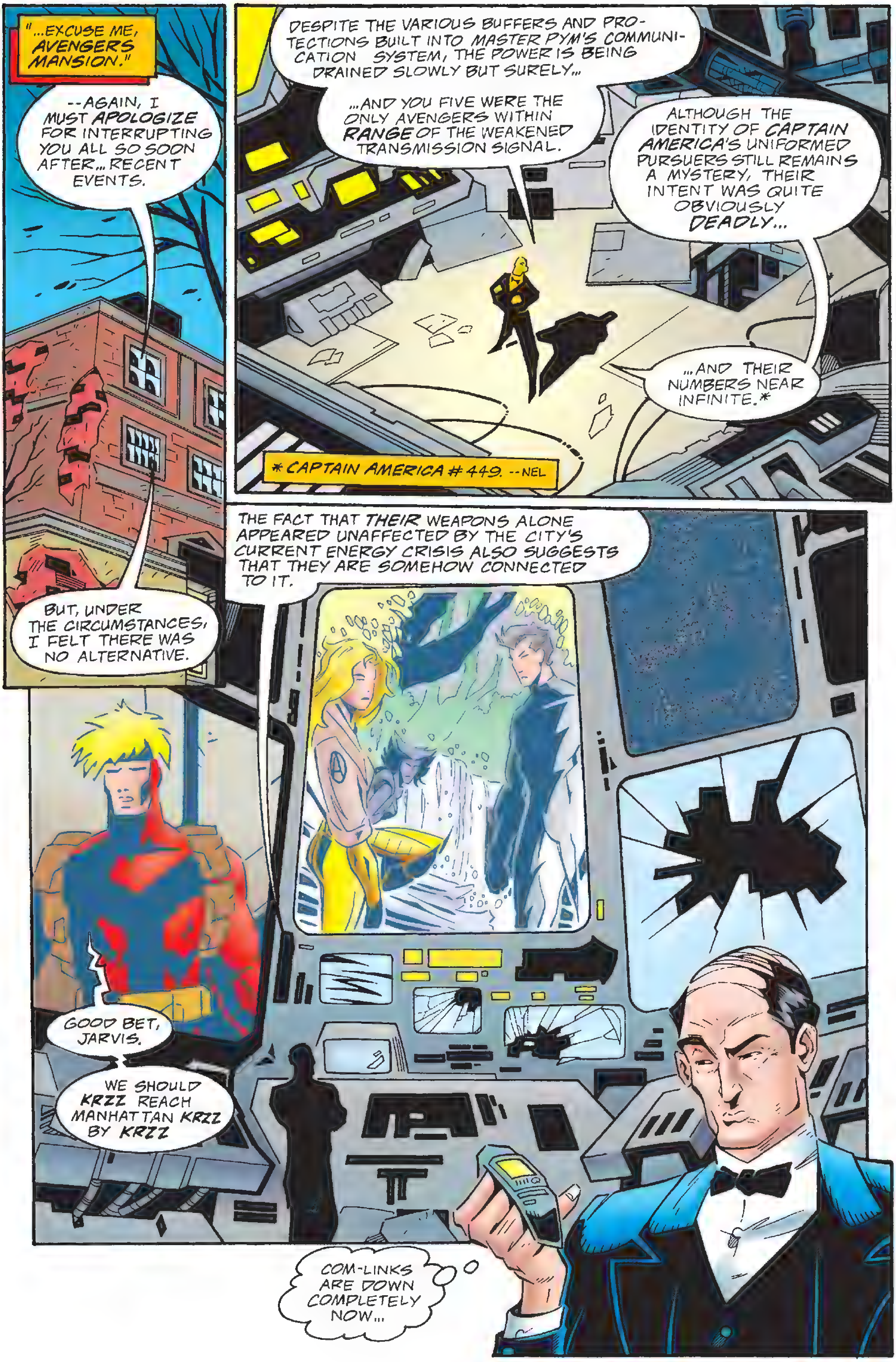
NOT TO SPEAK OF, NO.
TOO BAD.
BUT TRUST ME ON THIS, TONY. YOU DO NOT WANT TO GET STUCK IN--
SORRY, FOLKS, THAT'S IT.
THE CLASS IS FILLED.
NO CHOICE NOW.
MR MORTIMER SCIENCE
IT'S ALDEN OR NOTHING. AND I STILL NEED ONE MORE SCIENCE COURSE TO MEET SEMESTER REQUIREMENTS.
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM, KRIS? WALTERS COULDN'T RECOMMEND PROFESSOR ALDEN HIGHLY ENOUGH--
YOU MEAN THAT BLOKE THERE, GRINNING FROM EAR TO EAR...
...THE LAST TO MAKE THE CUT FOR RUSSELL'S CLASS?
SO THE JOKE'S ON ME.
BUT I DON'T GET IT.
YOU SHALL, MATE. WE BOTH SHALL, I'M AFRAID.
BUT NEITHER OF US WILL HAVE MUCH TO LAUGH ABOUT.
ALDEN'S INFAMOUS AROUND HERE. LEGEND HAS IT THAT SHE'S FAILED MORE STUDENTS THAN SHE'S--
"SHE"...?
YOU HEARD ME, ROVER.
THAT'S THE WICKED WITCH OF THE WESTINGHOUSE HERSELF...
...DEAD AHEAD.
SHE DOESN'T LOOK ALL THAT TOUGH TO ME.
AS A MATTER OF FACT, FROM WHERE I'M STANDING--


HOLY!
EXCUSE ME, MS.-- ER-- PROFESSOR --ALDEN...
...I'D LIKE TO... I WAS HOPING...
JUST STEP ASIDE AND FILL OUT THESE FORMS, THANK YOU.
IT CAN'T BE-- IT'S NOT POSSIBLE--
--BUT IT IS!
IT'S HER--THE GIRL I WAS DATING AT M.I.T., THE GIRL I ABANDONED WHEN I WAS SWEPT UP INTO THIS FUTURE--
--MEREDITH McCALL.
NEXT, PLEASE.
STILL HAVE SO MANY FEELINGS FOR HER, EMOTIONS I HADN'T EVEN BEGUN TO RESOLVE.
SEEMS TO ME LIKE JUST YESTERDAY WHEN WE WERE YOUNG AND IN LOVE, WITHOUT A CARE IN THE WORLD.
AND I'M STILL YOUNG, BUT SHE'S... SHE'S...
TEN WHOLE YEARS HAVE PASSED FOR HER IN THE SPACE OF A SINGLE HEARTBEAT FOR ME.
CAN'T LET MERI SEE ME HERE--NOW--
--NOT LIKE THIS.
I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN... DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO START...
HELLO...?
YOUNG MAN, DO YOU INTEND TO REGISTER FOR THIS COURSE, OR--
--NOT?

BLACKOUT...?!
WHAT THE
YEE!!!!!
STOP PUSHING
WHERE ARE THE EXITS
NO WINDOWS TO SPEAK OF, PITCH DARK IN HERE...
...CAN HARDLY SEE MY HAND IN FRONT OF MY FACE.
WHAT ABOUT EMERGENCY LIGHTING FOR A SCHOOL THIS SIZE--BACK-UP GENERATORS--
--WHY AREN'T THEY KICKING IN BY NOW?
CHEST-PLATE'S ALL THAT'S KEEPING ME GOING THESE DAYS, BUT IT'S THE ONLY ACTIVE ENERGY-SOURCE IN THE VICINITY.
CHK
AND PEOPLE ARE GOING TO GET SERIOUSLY HURT VERY SOON...

...'LESS I CAN SHED A LITTLE *LIGHT* ON THE SITUATION.
WHOA
WHO'S THAT
TOO BRIGHT TO--
THE DOORS--!
EXCELLENT.
NEW GAUNTLETS ARE WORKING LIKE A--
EXIT
UH-OH, SPOKE TOO SOON.
BEAM SHOULDN'T BE *FLICKERING* LIKE THAT *ALREADY.*
HAVE TO *CLEAR* A PATH THROUGH THE CROWD, *BLOW* THE DOORS OFF THIS PLACE...
...WHILE I STILL CAN.

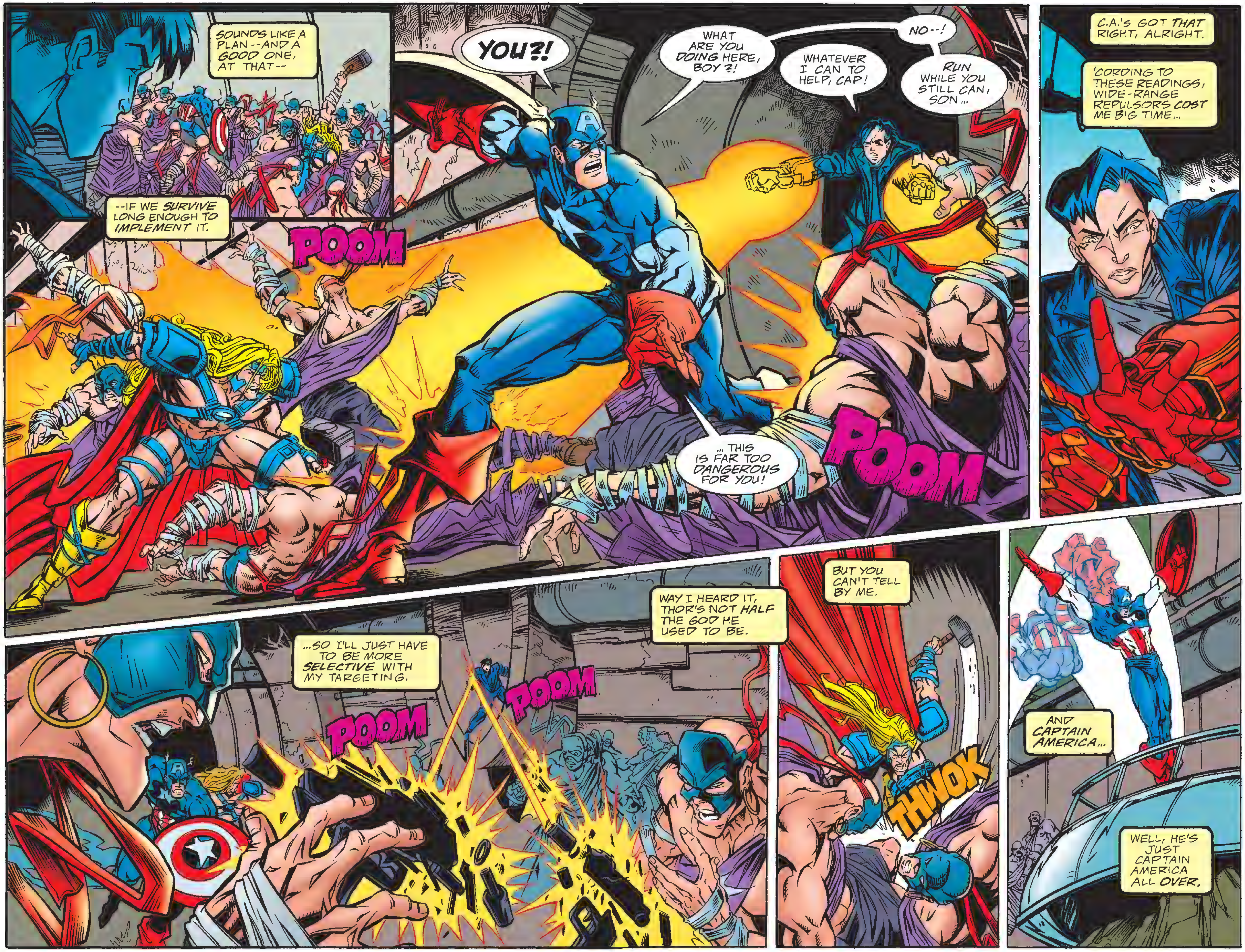
MAGNETI-REPULSORS ARE STILL ON-LINE-- FOR THE MOMENT, AT LEAST--
FREE
LET ME OUT OF
PLENTY OF ROOM
--BUT SOMETHING IS DRAINING MY POWER-LEVELS.
I WON'T EVEN MAKE IT OFF-CAMPUS, UNLESS...
PICKING UP *TRACE* ENERGY-READINGS --
--AMBIENT *MICROWAVE EMISSIONS,* FROM THE LOOKS OF 'EM--
--COMING FROM DOWN HERE.
PERFECT.
ALMOST AS WELL-STOCKED AS MY HOME LAB AT THE *STARK TOWNHOUSE*...


"...EXCUSE ME, AVENGERS MANSION."
--AGAIN, I MUST APOLOGIZE FOR INTERRUPTING YOU ALL SO SOON AFTER... RECENT EVENTS.
BUT, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I FELT THERE WAS NO ALTERNATIVE.
DESPITE THE VARIOUS BUFFERS AND PROTECTIONS BUILT INTO MASTER PYM'S COMMUNICATION SYSTEM, THE POWER IS BEING DRAINED SLOWLY BUT SURELY...
...AND YOU FIVE WERE THE ONLY AVENGERS WITHIN RANGE OF THE WEAKENED TRANSMISSION SIGNAL.
ALTHOUGH THE IDENTITY OF CAPTAIN AMERICA'S UNIFORMED PURSUERS STILL REMAINS A MYSTERY, THEIR INTENT WAS QUITE OBVIOUSLY DEADLY...
...AND THEIR NUMBERS NEAR INFINITE.*
*CAPTAIN AMERICA #449. --NEL
THE FACT THAT THEIR WEAPONS ALONE APPEARED UNAFFECTED BY THE CITY'S CURRENT ENERGY CRISIS ALSO SUGGESTS THAT THEY ARE SOMEHOW CONNECTED TO IT.
GOOD BET, JARVIS.
WE SHOULD KRZZ REACH MANHATTAN KRZZ BY KRZZ
COM-LINKS ARE DOWN COMPLETELY NOW...

"...AND WE STILL HAVEN'T HEARD FROM YOUNG MASTER ANTHONY."
THAT'S THAT.
EVEN WITH THE TOOLS HERE, IT'S ALL I CAN DO TO RE-ROUTE SOME OF THE POWER FROM MY GAUNTLETS--
--JURY-RIG A FORCE-FIELD OF SORTS TO SHIELD MY CHEST-PLATE FROM THE DAMPENING EFFECT--
--BUT MY REMAINING POWER IS STILL LIMITED, TO SAY THE LEAST.
HEART-RESPIRATOR WILL NEED RE-CHARGING SOON--
--VERY SOON--
--AND MY METERS ARE REGISTERING SOME KIND OF STRANGE ENERGY-SPIKE, NOT TOO FAR AWAY.
ALTHOUGH AUTHORITIES CONTINUE TO ATTEMPT TO PENETRATE THE DARKENED DOME THAT SUDDENLY APPEARED AROUND NEW YORK CITY...
...THE ENTIRE ISLAND REMAINS CUT OFF FROM OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE.

AND THE GOVERNOR HAS ALREADY--
TEK
INTERESTING...
...BUT I CAN'T AFFORD TO WASTE ANOTHER *ERG* ON RADIO BULLETINS.
TWO OPTIONS NOW.
EITHER I MAKE MY WAY TO THE EDGE OF THE CITY-- TRY AND *BREAK* THROUGH TO THE OUTSIDE BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE--
--OR I KEEP ON *TRACKING* THIS WEIRD POWER-PULSE.
CURIOSITY WILL BE THE DEATH OF ME YET.
BUT IF THOSE *SOUNDS* AHEAD ARE ANY *INDICATION*...
CHOOT
...THE *ANSWER* TO ALL MY QUESTIONS SHOULD BE JUST AROUND THE NEXT--
CHOOT
CHOOT

WHOA!?
KEEP GOING, THOR-- DON'T LET UP YET--
--WE'VE GOT TO REACH THEIR SKIMMER!
THAT DEVICE OPENED SOME SORT OF TRANS-PORTAL FOR THESE ZODIAC AGENTS...
...LETTING HORDES OF THEM THROUGH FROM HEAVEN KNOWS WHERE!
THOK
THAT BEING THE CASE, FRIEND CAPTAIN...
...IT'S QUITE POSSIBLE WE COULD USE IT TO PIERCE THE PLASMA-DOME SURROUNDING THE CITY!
WHOK

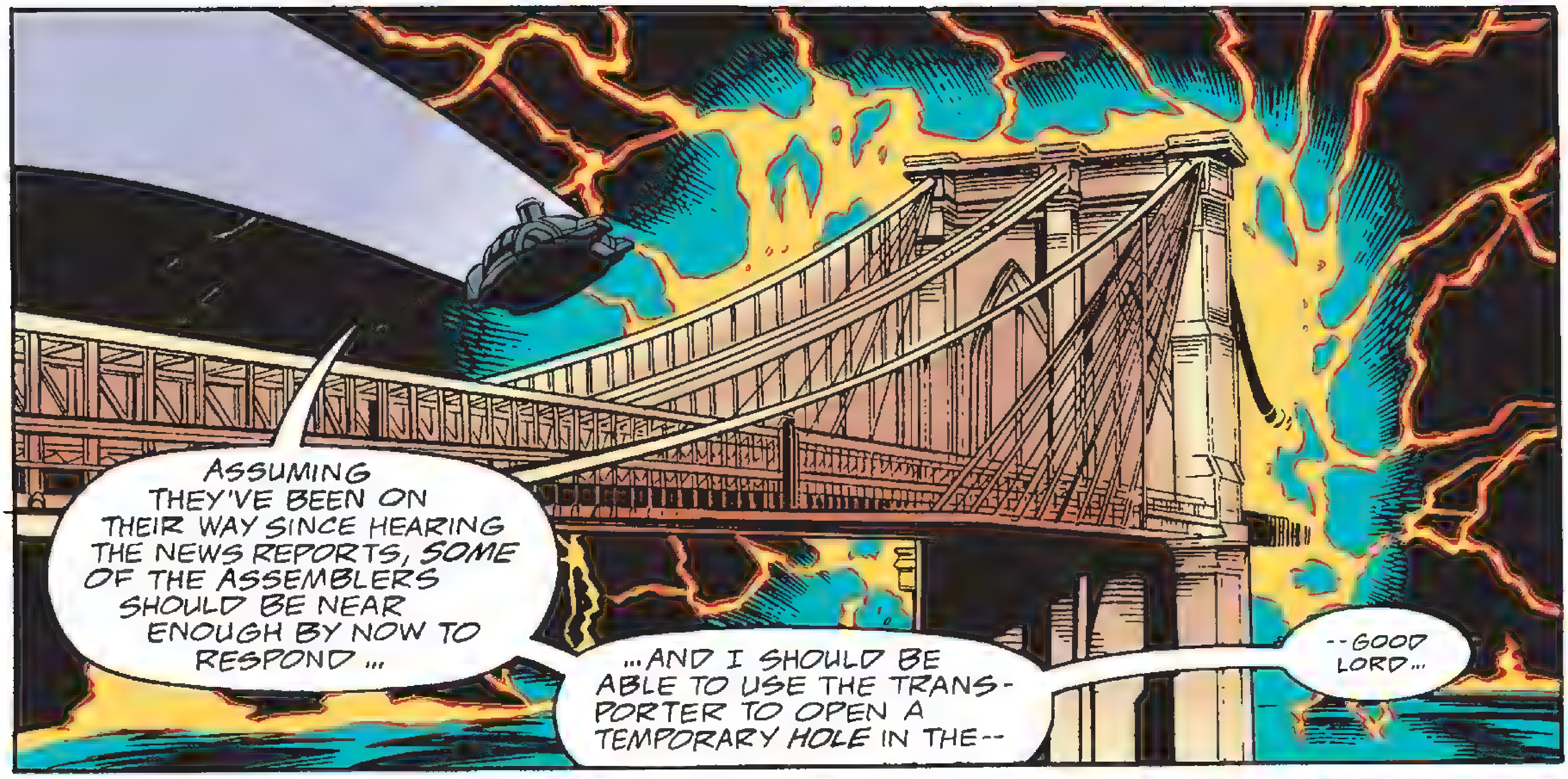

SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN--AND A GOOD ONE, AT THAT--
--IF WE SURVIVE LONG ENOUGH TO IMPLEMENT IT.
POOM
YOU?!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, BOY?!
WHATEVER I CAN TO HELP, CAP!
NO--!
RUN WHILE YOU STILL CAN, SON...
...THIS IS FAR TOO DANGEROUS FOR YOU!
POOM
C.A.'S GOT THAT RIGHT, ALRIGHT.
'CORDING TO THESE READINGS, WIDE-RANGE REPULSORS COST ME BIG TIME...
...SO I'LL JUST HAVE TO BE MORE SELECTIVE WITH MY TARGETING.
POOM
POOM
WAY I HEARD IT, THOR'S NOT HALF THE GOD HE USED TO BE.
BUT YOU CAN'T TELL BY ME.
THWOK
AND CAPTAIN AMERICA...
WELL, HE'S JUST CAPTAIN AMERICA ALL OVER.

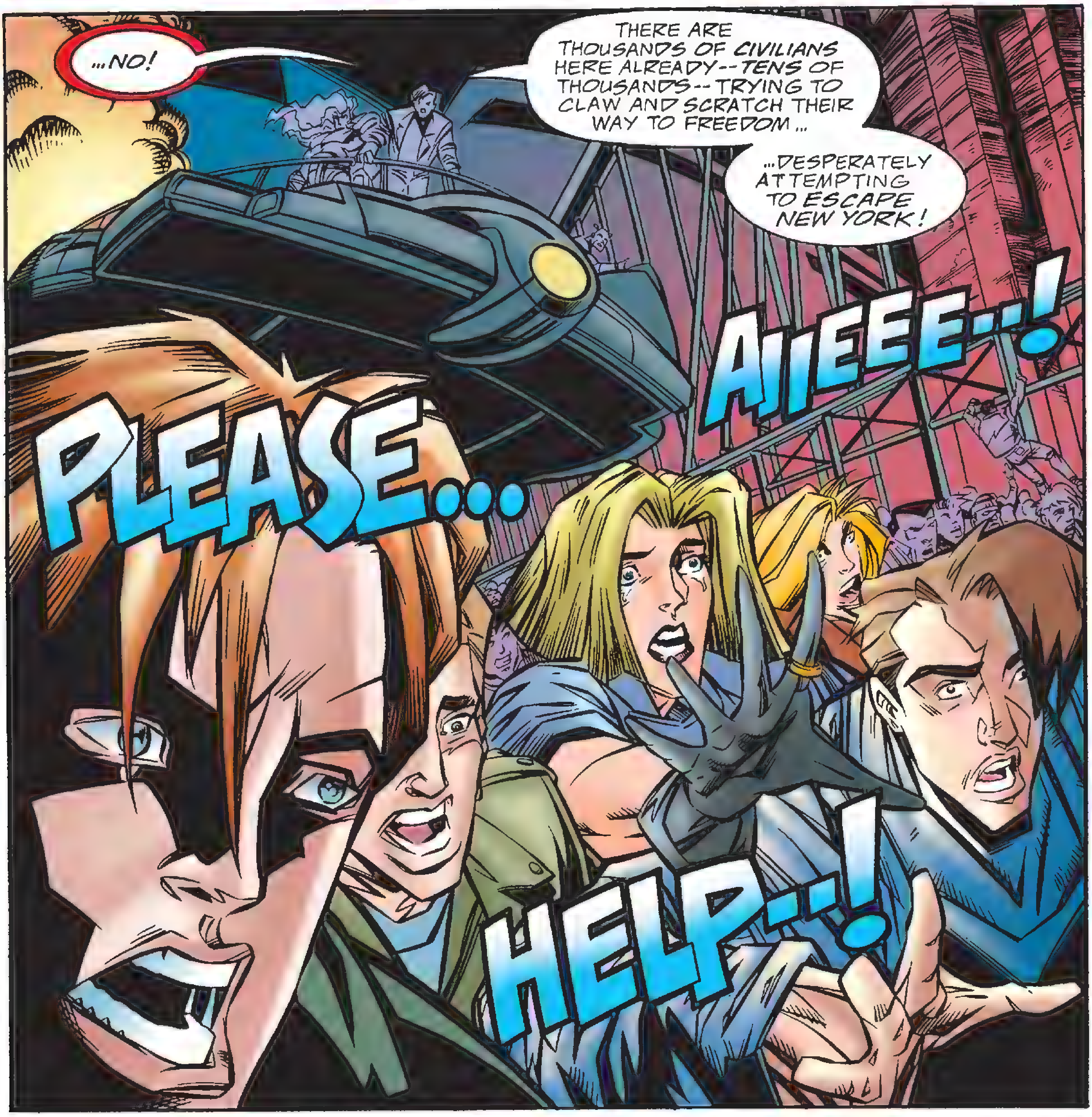
SKIMMER'S CONTROLS SEEM RELATIVELY SIMPLE...
TEKTEK
STOP HIM!
...LIKE TAKING CANDY FROM A BABY!
VWWSH
THEY CANNOT TAKE THE TRANSPORTER!
DESTROY THEM!
ALL ABOARD, PAL...
...WE'RE GOING IN FOR THE BOY!
CHOOT
CHOOT
DESTROY IT ALL, IF NECESSARY!
NICE TO KNOW YOU CARE, HEROES...
...LET'S SEE WHAT I CAN DO TO RETURN THE FAVOR!
SHHKSSSSS
YEAAR--!

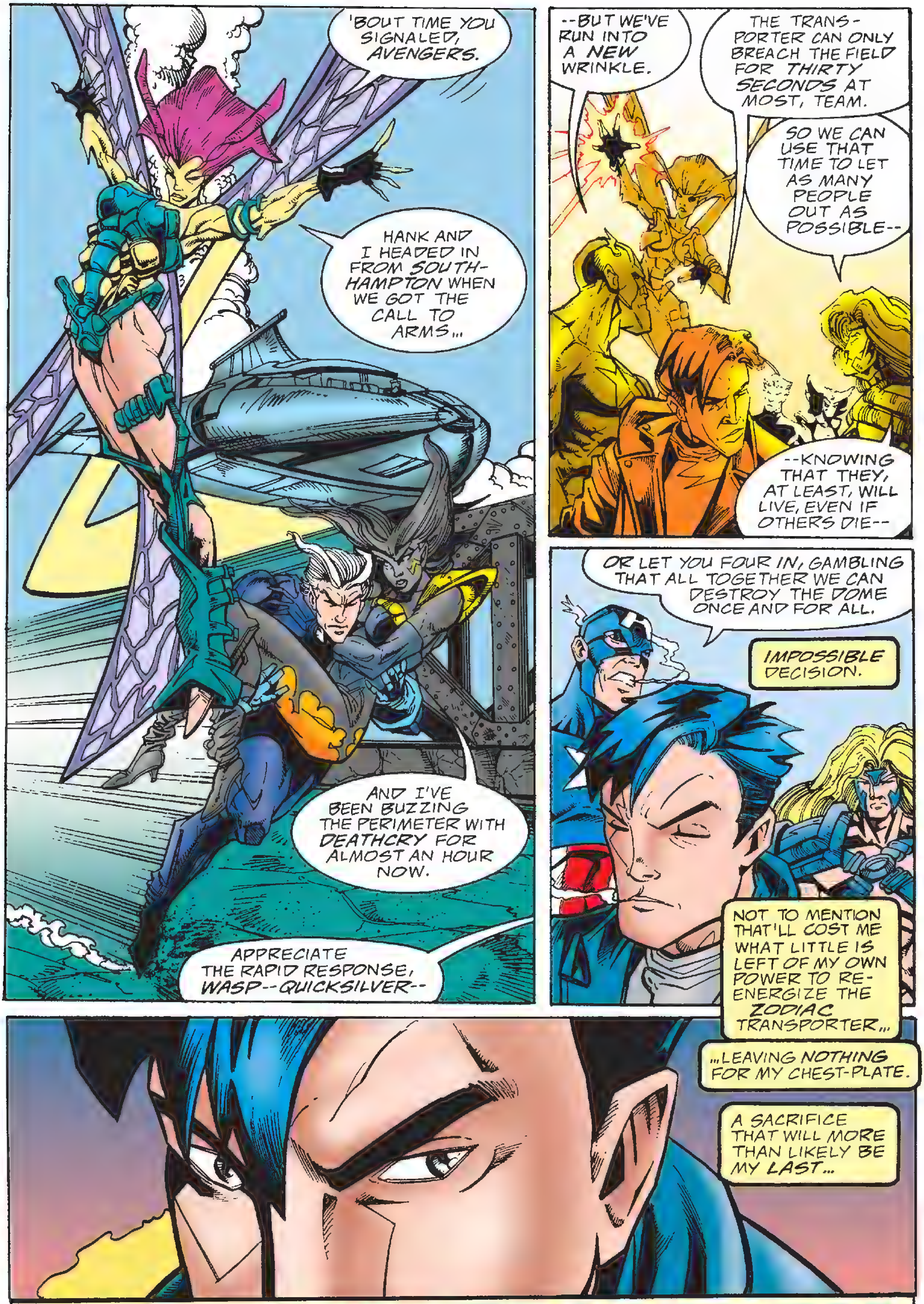
WALL OF STEAM CUT 'EM OFF AT THE PASS, CAP'N--BUT NOT FOR LONG--
--PUT THE PEDAL TO THE METAL!
WELL PLAYED, YOUNG STARK...
...BUT IT MAY PROVE TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE.
THE TRANSPORTER APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN DAMAGED IN THE CROSSFIRE.
IMPRESSIVE, LAD.
THEN I HAVE TO WORK FAST.
MINDFUL OF THE FAMILIAR EXPERTISE OF YOUR--
DON'T, THOR.
DON'T GO THERE.
KA-ROOOOM
HANG ON TIGHT, TEAM...
...WE'RE OUT OF THERE!

AND IT'S *WORSE* THAN EXPECTED.
TEMPERATURE'S *DROPPING* BY THE MINUTE!
ALMOST AS IF--
LOOK TO THE *STREETS*, AVENGERS!
THE CHILL IN THE AIR...
...IS THE VERY *LEAST* OF THE PROBLEM!
THE CITY'S IN *CHAOS!*
PEOPLE ARE *PANICKING*, OUT OF CONTROL...
BUT CHECK OUT THE *FIRES*, GUYS--

--BURNING DOWN AND OUT ON THEIR OWN--
--I THINK THE ENERGY-DAMPENING EFFECT IS ACTUALLY BEGINNING TO WORK ON A MOLECULAR LEVEL SOMEHOW...
... THREATENING TO PLUNGE THIS CITY INTO A TRUE DARK AGE.
ON THE UP SIDE, THOUGH...
...I'VE FINALLY FINISHED REPAIRING THIS TRANSPORTER.
AND SINCE THE ZODIAC TECHNOLOGY IS EFFECTIVELY IMMUNE TO THE INFLUENCE OF THEIR BLASTED DOME--
--THERE'S NO REASON I CAN'T HOT-WIRE IT TO THIS COMMUNICARD THAT JARVIS GAVE ME...
...AND PUT OUT A FULL-SCALE ALERT FOR ALL OFF-ISLAND AVENGERS TO MEET US AT THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE.


ASSUMING THEY'VE BEEN ON THEIR WAY SINCE HEARING THE NEWS REPORTS, *SOME* OF THE ASSEMBLERS SHOULD BE NEAR ENOUGH BY NOW TO RESPOND ...
...AND I SHOULD BE ABLE TO USE THE TRANSPORTER TO OPEN A TEMPORARY *HOLE* IN THE--
--GOOD LORD...


...NO!
THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF *CIVILIANS* HERE ALREADY--*TENS* OF THOUSANDS--TRYING TO CLAW AND SCRATCH THEIR WAY TO FREEDOM...
...DESPERATELY ATTEMPTING TO *ESCAPE NEW YORK!*
AIIEEE...!
PLEASE...
HELP...!


'BOUT TIME YOU SIGNALED, *AVENGERS.*
HANK AND I HEADED IN FROM *SOUTHHAMPTON* WHEN WE GOT THE CALL TO ARMS...
AND I'VE BEEN BUZZING THE PERIMETER WITH *DEATHCRY* FOR ALMOST AN HOUR NOW.
APPRECIATE THE RAPID RESPONSE, *WASP--QUICKSILVER--*
--BUT WE'VE RUN INTO A *NEW* WRINKLE.
THE TRANSPORTER CAN ONLY BREACH THE FIELD FOR *THIRTY SECONDS* AT MOST, TEAM.
SO WE CAN USE THAT TIME TO LET AS MANY PEOPLE OUT AS POSSIBLE--
--KNOWING THAT THEY, AT LEAST, WILL LIVE, EVEN IF OTHERS DIE--
OR LET YOU FOUR IN, GAMBLING THAT ALL TOGETHER WE CAN DESTROY THE DOME ONCE AND FOR ALL.
IMPOSSIBLE DECISION.
NOT TO MENTION THAT'LL COST ME WHAT LITTLE IS LEFT OF MY OWN POWER TO RE-ENERGIZE THE *ZODIAC* TRANSPORTER...
...LEAVING *NOTHING* FOR MY CHEST-PLATE.
A SACRIFICE THAT WILL *MORE* THAN LIKELY BE MY *LAST...*

CONCLUDES IN
AVENGERS #396
--LIBRA UNLEASHED!

NEXT: FROSTBITE!

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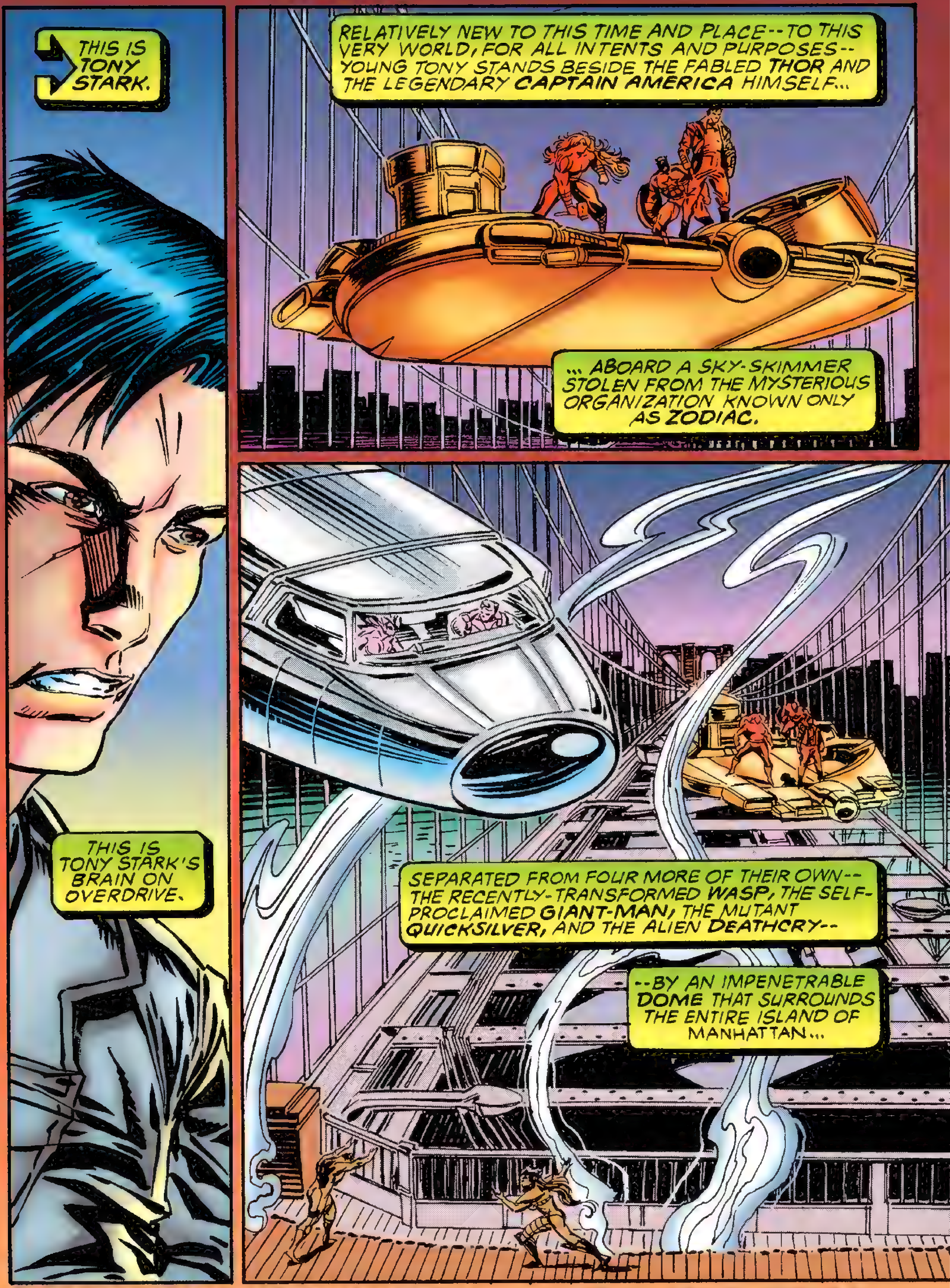
AVENGERS
LUKE ROSS '95


THIS IS TONY STARK.
THIS IS TONY STARK'S BRAIN ON OVERDRIVE.
RELATIVELY NEW TO THIS TIME AND PLACE--TO THIS VERY WORLD, FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES--YOUNG TONY STANDS BESIDE THE FABLED **THOR** AND THE LEGENDARY **CAPTAIN AMERICA** HIMSELF...
...ABOARD A SKY-SKIMMER STOLEN FROM THE MYSTERIOUS ORGANIZATION KNOWN ONLY AS **ZODIAC.**
SEPARATED FROM FOUR MORE OF THEIR OWN--THE RECENTLY-TRANSFORMED **WASP,** THE SELF-PROCLAIMED **GIANT-MAN,** THE MUTANT **QUICKSILVER,** AND THE ALIEN **DEATHCRY**--
--BY AN IMPENETRABLE **DOME** THAT SURROUNDS THE ENTIRE ISLAND OF MANHATTAN...

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Stan Lee Presents

AN AVENGERS EVENT: FIRST SIGN PART 4

"BALANCE OF POWER"

TERRY KAVANAGH WRITER
JOHN STATEMA BREAKDOWNS
TOM PALMER FINISHES
HIGGINS & OAKLEY LETTERERS
FRANK LOPEZ COLORIST
MALIBU COLOR SEPARATIONS
RALPH MACCHIO EDITOR
MARK GRUENWALD GROUP EDITOR
BOB HARRAS EDITOR IN CHIEF

...THE FATE OF A CITY RESTS ON THE SHOULDERS OF THESE GATHERED AVENGERS.
AS THE ZODIAC FORCE-FIELD CONTINUES TO LEECH ALL POWER AND ENERGY FROM WITHIN ON AN INCREASINGLY GREATER SCALE, THREATENING TO PLUNGE NEW YORK INTO A LITERAL DARK AGE...
...THEY FACE AN IMPOSSIBLE CHOICE.
THE HEROES USE THE PURLOINED TECHNOLOGY ABOARD THE SKIMMER TO BREACH THE DOME MOMENTARILY. NOW, SHOULD THEY GRANT SAFE PASSAGE TO THE THOUSANDS OF INNOCENTS ALREADY GATHERED HERE--
--INSURING THAT SOME WILL SURVIVE THE CHAOS TO COME--
--OR ALLOW ENTRY TO THEIR FELLOW HEROES, TRUSTING THAT TOGETHER THEY CAN TOPPLE THE DOME COMPLETELY?
AND THE RISK IS FAR MORE PERSONAL THAN MOST SUSPECT.
LITTLE OR NOTHING OF MY OWN RESERVES LEFT ALREADY.
NO TIME TO WASTE ANY MORE.

IF WE'RE GOING TO *RE-ENERGIZE* THE TRANSPORTER, USE IT TO PENETRATE THE DOME...
KRZZ
...IT'S *NOW* OR NEVER!
ZAKK
'OD'S BLOOD!
GOOD LORD!
THE BOY'S *ACTIVATED* THE ZODIAC DEVICE--*CHARGING* IT UP--

-- WITH THE POWER FROM HIS *CHEST-PLATE!*
UHNN!
IT'S *WORKING*-- PIERCING A *HOLE* IN THE DOME ALREADY-- BUT...
HANK, NO!
STAY *BACK*, MAN, TURN AROUND! THE *QUINJET* *WON'T* FLY--
"--*WITHIN* THE FIELD!"
SSPPT SPT
YAAA!!
IT'S COMING *DOWN*--!
OUTTA THE WAY!
HANG *ON*, EX O' MINE!
SOON AS WE'RE *CLEAR* OF THE Q-JET...

SAFETY FOR THE THRONGS BELOW--
--IS MERELY A HAMMER'S THROW AWAY!
WHOK
SPLASH
BUT THE TRANSPORTER BEAM IS STILL WIDENING, THE DOME ERODING FURTHER BY THE SECOND...
AND THE CROWDS ARE SCARED-- PANICKING--NOT STOPPING FOR ANYTHING...

...OR ANY-ONE!
GOOD JOB, TEAM.
WE'RE ALL TOGETHER NOW, AND A GOOD NUMBER OF CIVILIANS ARE THROUGH THE BREACH...
...BUT IT'S JUST A MATTER OF MOMENTS UNTIL THE TRANSPORTER RUNS OUT OF JUI--
STARK!
CHEST-PLATE'S DEAD! HEART'S SEIZING UP AS WE SPEAK.
I MIGHT BE ABLE TO RECLAIM THE POWER HE SACRIFICED--RECHARGE THE KIDS RESPIRATOR FROM THE ZODIAC GENERATOR BEFORE IT BURNS OUT--
--BUT IF THE DOME RESEALS AROUND THOSE PEOPLE BELOW...
WE CAN'T LOSE TONY, HANK.
NOT AGAIN.
NOT SO SOON AFTER...

JUST DO WHAT YOU CAN-- WHAT YOU HAVE TO--
--I'LL DO THE REST.
WHDWHP
WINDS FROM HER WINGS...
DRIVING US BACK...
CROWD'S CLEAR, HANK.
WHAT CAN WE--
I'VE REROUTED THE GAUNTLET'S CIRCUIT-BREAKERS, REVERSED THE POLARITY ON HIS TRANSFORMERS...
...BUT A LITTLE PRAYER WOULDN'T HURT.
KRZZZZZ
SO FAR, SO GOOD.
TRANSPORTER'S RUNNING DRY, THE POWER REVERTING TO ITS ORIGINAL SOURCE.
--FIELD INTEGRITY'S RESTORED--
--BUT...
NOOO! OPEN IT UP AGAIN!

UHHN...
THANK HEAVENS, LAD.
THAT WAS QUITE A *FOOLHARDY* STUNT YOU--
THE *TRANSPORTER!*
IT'S *RUINED*, FUSED BEYOND REPAIR NOW!
NOT BEFORE SERVING ITS PURPOSE.
AND I THINK WE CAN SAFELY ASSUME IT WAS INTENDED FOR DELIVERY TO SOME SORT OF ZODIAC *BASE STATION*...
UNDERSTOOD, CAPTAIN.
IF SUCH A PLACE *DOES* EXIST WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THE DOME...
...I WILL *FIND* IT WITHIN THE HOUR.
UNTIL THEN, AVENGERS...
WE'RE TRAPPED AGAIN!
TRAITORS!
...A STRATEGIC *RETREAT* APPEARS TO BE IN ORDER.

MEANWHILE...
...THE SPLENDID SILENCE OF THE GRAND CANYON IS BROKEN ONLY BY THE ROCKETING ROAR OF A SINGULARLY SPECIAL AIRCRAFT--
--A FORCE WORKS HEX-SHIP--
--PILOTED BY TWO SINGULARLY SPECIAL INDIVIDUALS.
VRRRM
THE SCARLET WITCH--MUTANT MISTRESS OF PROBABILITY--AND THE MASTER BOWMAN KNOWN AS HAWKEYE...
...AVENGERS ONCE AND ALWAYS.
STILL NOT SURE WE'RE DOING THE RIGHT THING, CLINT.
NEITHER AM I, LADY, NOT BY A LONG SHOT.
THE TEAM HAS A LOT OF HISTORY, WANDA--TOO MUCH FOR MY LIKING, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT--
--BUT IF WE LEARNED ANYTHING FROM STARK'S... FROM OUR... MISTAKES, IT'S THAT WE NEED EACH OTHER.
MAYBE NOW MORE THAN EVER.
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO REACH THE MANSION SINCE WE LEFT CALIFORNIA, BUT--

HANG ON.
WE'RE RECEIVING A PRIORITY OVERRIDE...
VEEP VEEP VEEP
...FROM S.H.I.E.L.D.,* NO LESS.
* STRATEGIC HAZARD INTERNATIONAL ESPIONAGE LOGISTICS DIRECTORATE. --Ralphie
DUGGAN, HOW'D YOU MANAGE TO--
LATER, BARTON.
WE GOT US A SITUATION ON OUR HANDS RIGHT NOW, NO TIME TA FILL YOU IN ON THE DETAILS...
...SUFFICE IT TO SAY, WE'RE TALKIN' HULK.
TRANSFER THE COORDINATES, COMMANDER...
...WE'RE ON OUR--
VRRSH
WHOAH?!
THING APPEARED SO FAST, OUT OF NOWHERE...

...BUT *MILITARY* STEALTH-TECH ISN'T SUPPOSED TO BE ANYWHERE *NEAR* THAT ADVANCED.
CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG, HAWK, BUT THEY'RE NOT *SUPPOSED* TO HAVE PLASMA-PARTICLE WEAPONS EITHER...
...WEAPONS THAT CAN KNOCK US *OUT* OF THE SKY.
PHOOM
THREE OF THE FOUR ENGINES ARE *DOWN*! WE'RE OUT OF CONTROL, *LOSING* ALTITUDE FAST!
HOLD 'ER STEADY A FEW MORE SECONDS, WITCH. JUST LONG ENOUGH--
--NOW, *NOW*--
TEK
-- TO GET 'EM IN MY *SIGHTS*!
PHOOM
KAROOM
KAROOM

THE INTREPID...
...A ONCE-ACTIVE AIRCRAFT CARRIER THAT PROWLED THE SOUTH PACIFIC DURING WORLD WAR II--PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES AND HER ALLIES--
--NOW FUNCTIONS AS AN HISTORICAL MUSEUM, DOCKED ON THE LOWER WEST SIDE OF MANHATTAN.
"THIS JUST GOT PERSONAL, AVENGERS.
"THAT SHIP BEARS THE SCARS OF THE MOST INFAMOUS KAMIKAZE ATTACK OF THE WAR, INFLICTED DURING THE CRITICAL BATTLE OF OKINAWA...
"...SHE EARNED A MORE HONORABLE RETIREMENT THAN THIS.
"THE ZODIACS MUST HAVE DECIDED IT WOULD BE EASY TO TAKE--AND EVEN EASIER TO HOLD--AS A BASE OF OPERATIONS...
...BUT WE'RE ABOUT TO PROVE THEM VERY WRONG.
QUICKSILVER'S RECONNAISSANCE WAS RIGHT ON TARGET--AND HE MUST BE AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE STILL--
--BUT WE'RE BEST OFF STICKING TO THE SHADOWS AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, STAYING OUT OF THE MOONLIGHT.
ESPECIALLY YOU, TONY, IF YOUR METALS CATCH EVEN A GLINT OF--

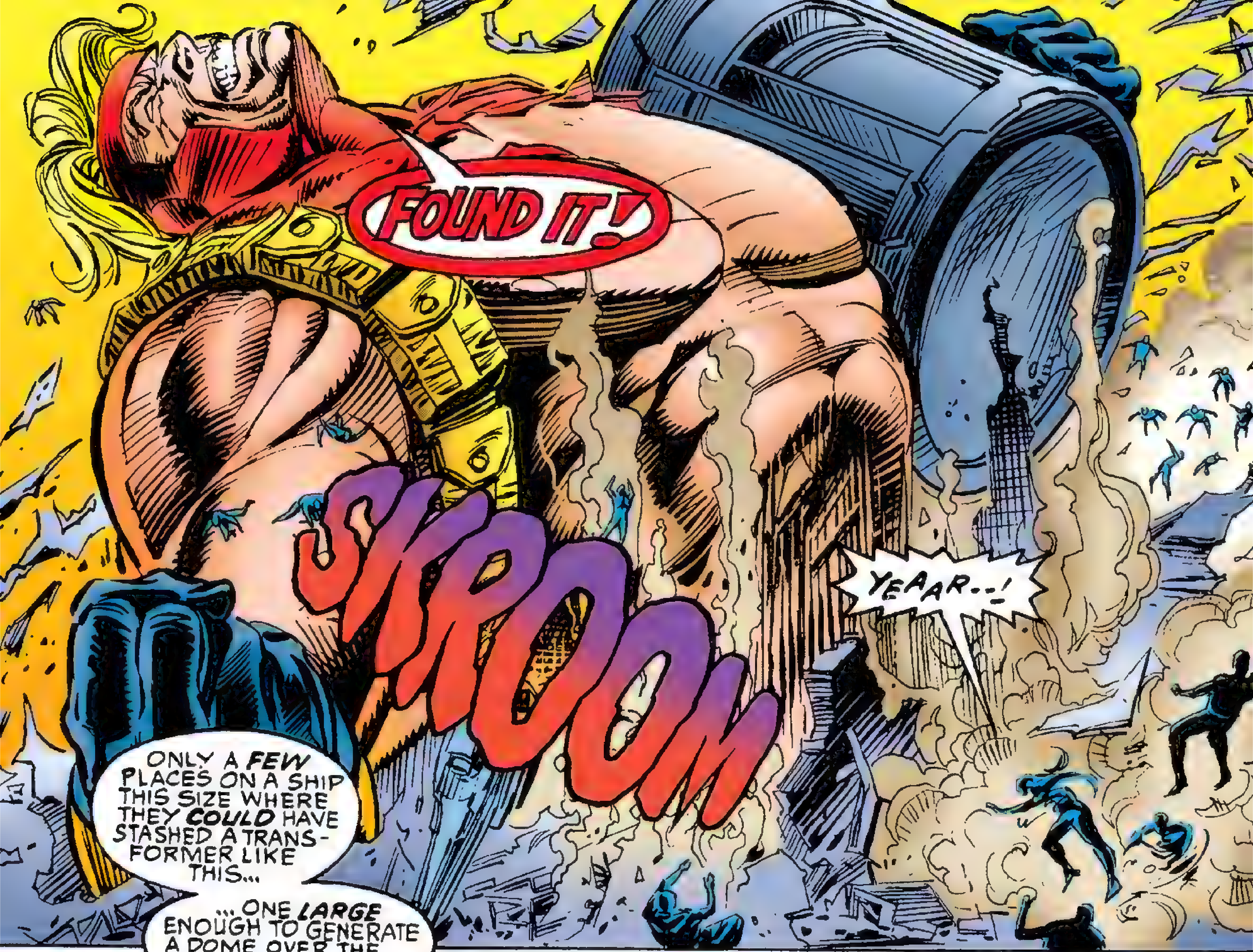
LIGHT!
MOVING BETWEEN THE BUILDINGS OVER THERE!
CHOOM CHOOM
WHATEVER IT IS...
...TEAR IT APART!
TOO LATE! TEAM--
--WE'VE BEEN SPOTTED!
--THEY'RE ZEROING IN ON THE BOY'S GAUNTLETS ALREADY.
ZZTZ
YIPE!

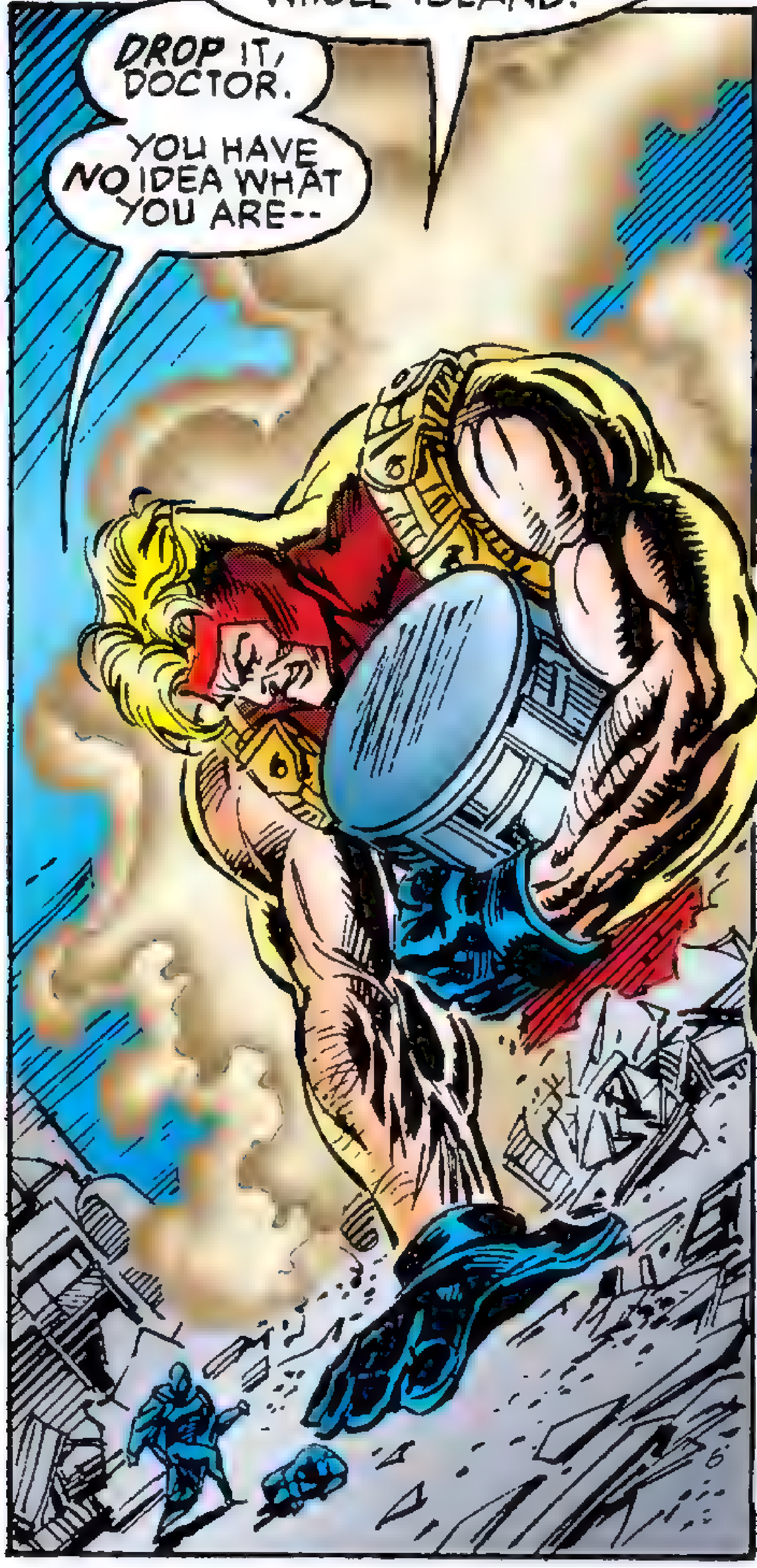
AND *SURROUNDED* CAPTAIN.
ALL THAT'S LEFT NOW...
...IS THE FINAL *ORDER* TO--
CHOOM
ALLOW ME TO *GUESS*, ZODIAC...
...*FIRE*?!
PERFECT TIMING, PETE, AS ALWAYS.
CONCUSSION-BLAST PUT THEIR LEADER *DOWN* FOR THE DURATION...
WUD

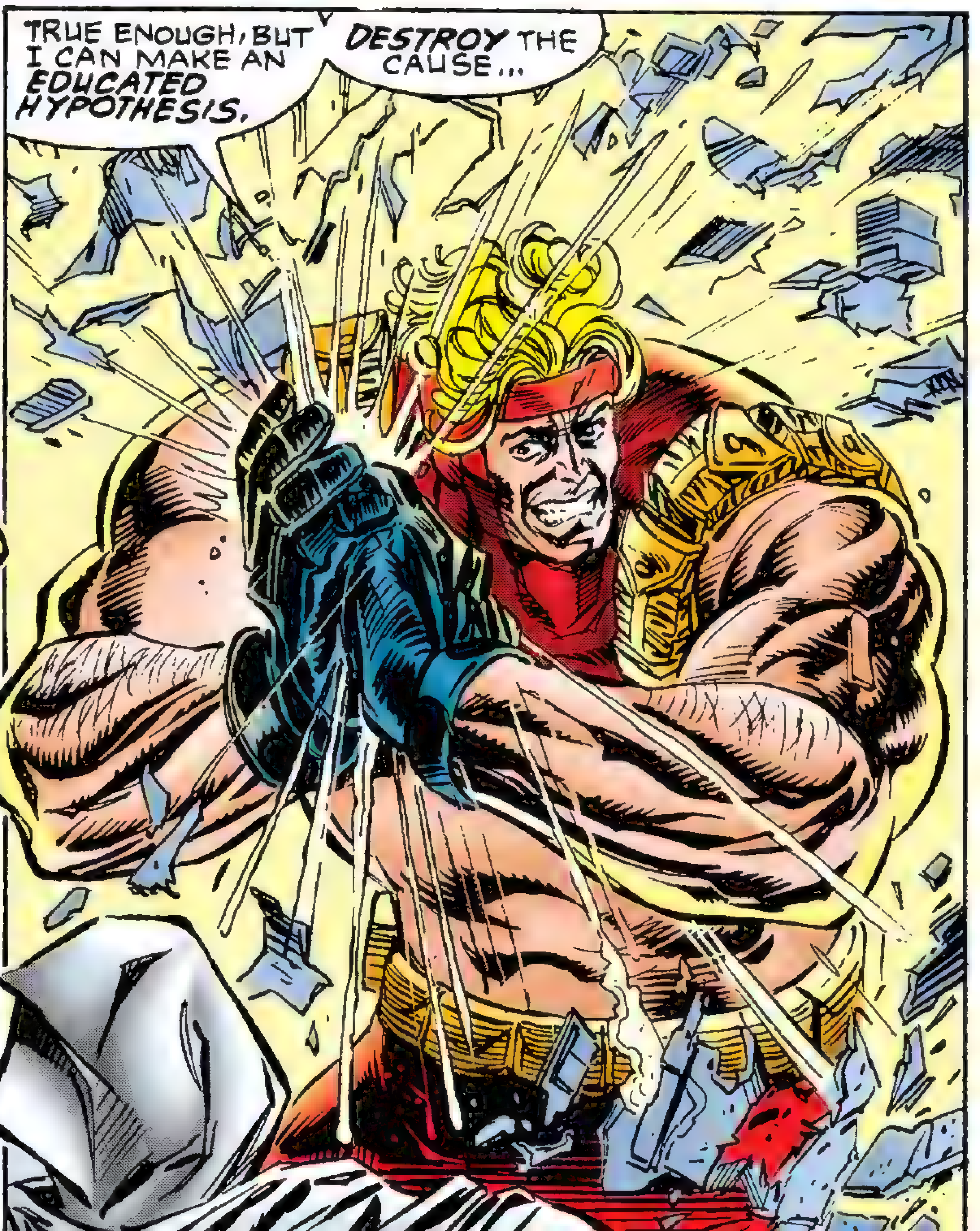
... AND *RECLAIMED* THE ADVANTAGE OF SURPRISE.
TZZT
ALL ABOARD ASSEMBLERS--
SKRZZ
WOK
--WE'RE *TAKING* BACK THE SHIP!
CHOOM CHOOM
NOT JUST YET, AVENGERS.
THE *ZODIAC* SOLDIER YOU SO RUDELY AMBUSHED BELOW WAS NOTHING MORE THAN THEIR FIELD-LIEUTENANT.
I AM THEIR *GENERAL.*
YOU MAY CALL ME *LIBRA!*
KWOOM

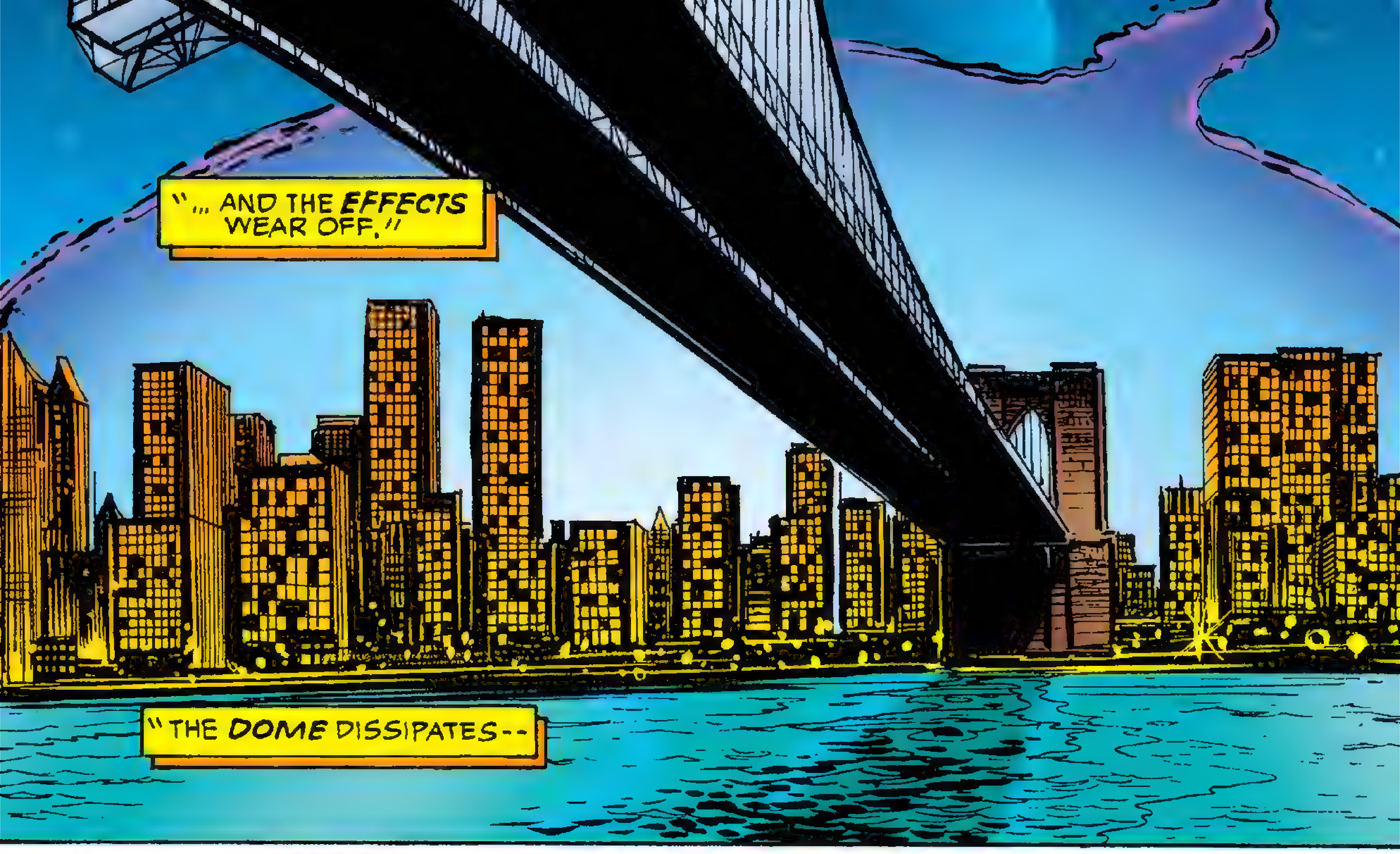
...FOR THE PRECIOUS FEW MOMENTS LEFT TO YOU AT, LEAST...
MORE THAN ENOUGH TIME TO DEAL WITH THE LIKES OF--
I AM AFRAID, MUTANT...
THWAK
NO!
...YOU WOULD HAVE TO BE FAR FASTER THAN THAT.
LET ME GO!
I HAVE TO REACH HIM BE-FORE--
UKK
CURIOUS.
AN ACTUAL ALIEN.
WITH TALONS CAPABLE OF DOING MUCH DAMAGE TO A LESSER BEING, AN AVERAGE MORTAL.
BUT DENSITY IS MINE TO CONTROL AVENGERS...
...AS WELL AS DESTINY.
THE DESTINY OF ALL WHO LIVE AND BREATHE UNDER THE DOME OF ZODIAC IS IN OUR HANDS ALREADY, BROUGHT BACK DOWN TO EARTH WHERE IT BELONGS.
EVENTUALLY, THE WORLD ENTIRE WILL BE FREE OF THE SWAY OF THE STARS ABOVE...

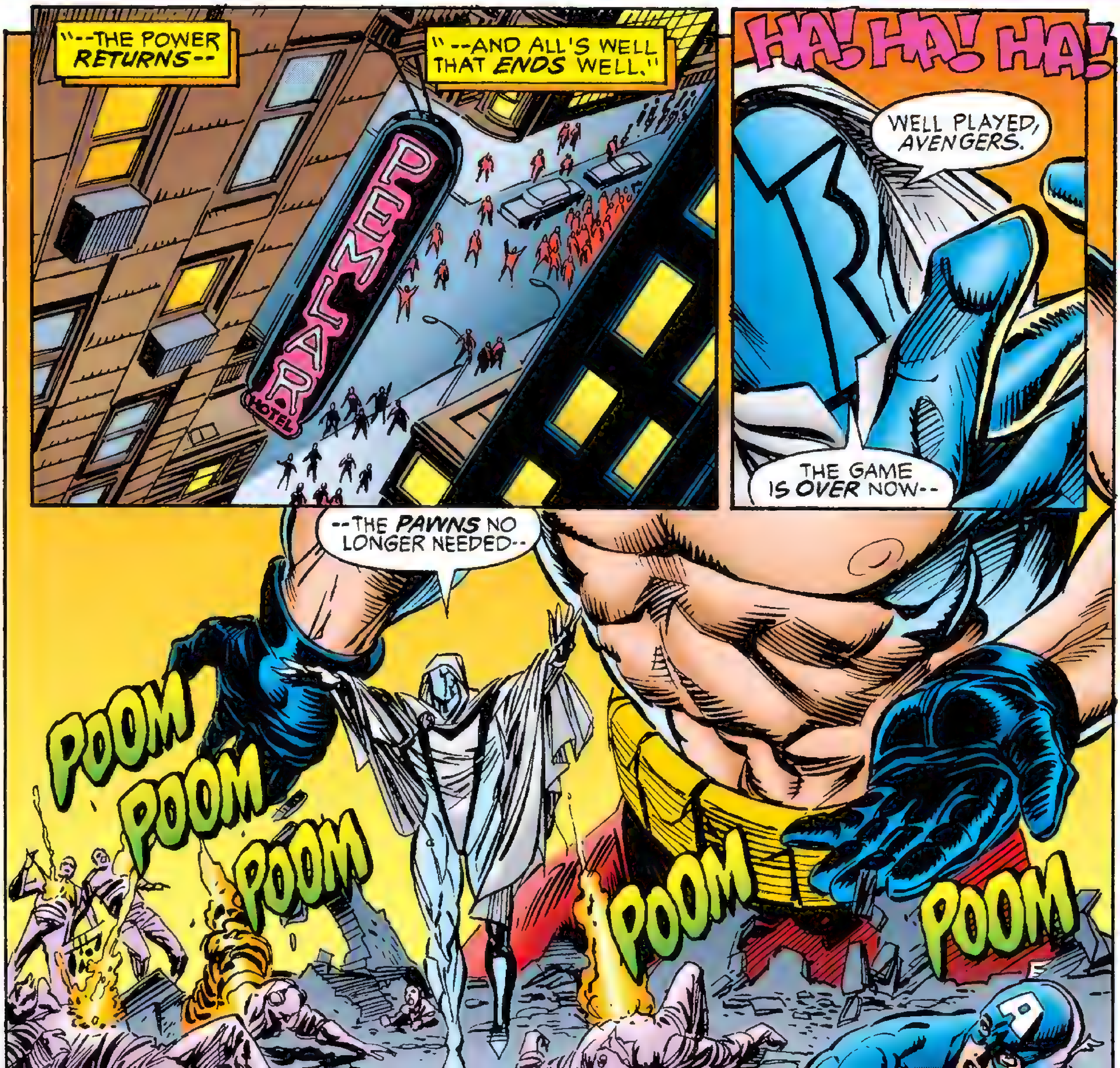
"...AS OUR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE *WIDENS*."
GOT TO BE DOWN HERE *SOMEWHERE*.
RELEASE HER, *LIBRA*!
NOW!
Uhhn!
TZZT
GLADLY, INSECT...
WOK
Uuff!
...SO LONG AS YOU FOOLS CONTINUE TO DO MY WORK FOR ME.
WELCOME OUR *NEW WORLD*, AVENGERS.
UNFORTUNATELY...
...MY *ZODIAC* WILL SUFFER NEITHER FOOLS--
--*NOR* HEROES.


FOUND IT!
SKROOM
YEAAR..!
ONLY A FEW PLACES ON A SHIP THIS SIZE WHERE THEY COULD HAVE STASHED A TRANSFORMER LIKE THIS...
...ONE LARGE ENOUGH TO GENERATE A DOME OVER THE WHOLE ISLAND.


DROP IT, DOCTOR.
YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU ARE--


TRUE ENOUGH, BUT I CAN MAKE AN EDUCATED HYPOTHESIS.
DESTROY THE CAUSE...


"... AND THE *EFFECTS* WEAR OFF."
"THE *DOME* DISSIPATES--


"--THE POWER *RETURNS*--
"--AND ALL'S WELL THAT *ENDS* WELL."
PEMLAR
HOTEL
HA! HA! HA!
WELL PLAYED, AVENGERS.
THE GAME IS *OVER* NOW--
--THE *PAWNS* NO LONGER NEEDED--
POOM
POOM
POOM
POOM
POOM

"... BUT THE GAMBIT HAS PROVEN SUCCESSFUL ENOUGH."
POOM
"SHARRA'S CLAWS..."
POOM
POOM
... HE'S DETONATED SOME KIND OF BOMBS IN THEIR CLOTHING.
WHAT COULD BE DONE HERE CAN BE DONE ANYWHERE.
EVERYWHERE. WHEN THE REST OF US ARE READY...
THE REST OF THEM...?
MORE LIKE HIM--ZEALOTS WILLING TO DESTROY THEIR OWN FOR A MAD CAUSE--
--I SHUDDER TO THINK...
LIBRA WAS HARDLY THE FIRST TO FOLLOW SUCH A PATH, WASP.
HE SURELY WON'T BE THE LAST.
AND I FEAR HE WAS ONLY THE TIP OF THE ZODIAC ICEBERG...
THE END...?]

AVENGERS
A
THE ASSEMBLY

A TEARFUL FAREWELL (or, "Get out of here, we've got work to do!")

As you may have noticed by now, Bob Harras is no longer writing AVENGERS due to his naming as the Editor in Chief of Marvel Comics. Bob came aboard with issue #343 (following a six-issue stint from #334-339) which was actually preceded by issue #280 (who else could spin a heart-tugging tale focused solely on Jarvis?). From the get-go, Bob ripped right into action, building on the fabled stories of the past while paving new ground for stories yet to be told. Whether it was the return of the Swordsman in his initial voyage or the corruption of Tony Stark in his grand finale, Bob always seemed to be in the midst of change and controversy. Above all else, he steadfastly believed in the importance of character, and loved to write about our heroes as *people* (albeit it very special people indeed). His love and devotion to this and the tales that came before made him the epitome of the perfect comic-book writer. Now, he's my boss, proving that nobody's perfect. Farewell, Dr. Love.

–Ralph Macchio
Endangered Species

Dear Friends,

I could hardly contain my excitement when I turned to the final page of AVENGERS #392 – *Mantis is back!*

The preceding months with "The Crossing" storyline have brought the AVENGERS back to a thrill level that hasn't been seen in several years. Mantis's return has raised that thrill level even higher. "This one" is truly one of the most intriguing characters in all of comicdom with a complexity that rivals Jean Grey. I'm glad to finally see that a writer besides Steve Englehart (who created her) has the courage to bring her back. With Mantis back, the storyline possibilities are endless – can you just imagine?? I only pray that this Mantis isn't from some alternative future or timeline – that concept is truly getting o-l-d.

Once again, *thank you* for Mantis and "The Crossing!"

Anthony Garrison
248 Scott Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

Oh, this is very much the Mantis you know and remember, Anthony, and she is m-a-d!

AVENGERS,

AVENGERS #392 was like a dream come true. Not only did we have the solid writing of Bob Harras and the striking inking of Tom Palmer that I've almost come to take for granted (please don't leave this title!), but one of my favorite pencilers M.C. Wyman was on board as well. His big explosive style is perfect for an all-out book like the AVENGERS.

"'The Crossing' features everything that made the AVENGERS classics."

There are so many juicy subplots both big and (seemingly) small that this book is loaded from cover to cover. Throw in all the fine characterization and it feels like it's going to burst! (Sometime around issue #400, hmmmm?). Why is Iron Man, a founding member, now a murdering traitor? What's with Jarvis's sneaky looks on page 13? If there is anyone I would trust completely, it would be Jarvis...until now. Is Luna going to blow the whistle on Tony Stark? How is Tuc going to fit in with all of this? What's the secret of the now-sealed off mansion? There is just so much going on and now *Mantis is back!!! Wah-hoo!* I'm overloading here!

Can't you put this book out bi-monthly so I don't have to wait so long between issues?

Bring back Thor and Cap!

Michael McClelland
1324 Hollywood Way
Burbank, CA 91505

What? You don't trust Jarvis? After the events of AVENGERS: TIMESLIDE, it should be clear just where the butler supreme's loyalty lies. As for issue #400, we've got something even bigger planned...

Dear Assemblers,

"The Crossing" has been great so far. Recent Kang stories have been way too complex to be enjoyable, but this one looks good so far. I hope this story will resolve the problem of having two Swordsmen around.

I'm anxious to see how you explain Tony Stark's mysterious behavior. Whether or not the explanation is plausible may well determine if this storyline is an all-time classic or a colossal dud. So far, so good!

John Warren
103G Knollwood Dr.
Americus, GA 31709

The Swordsman that appeared in "The Crossing" is none other than the Cotati who mated with Mantis way back when, leading (in part) to the events of this story. He has little to do with the Swordsman from the alternate reality, save that the Cotati was drawn to him because of his identity – alternate or not.

Fellow Avengers:

Although the storyline has only reached its midpoint, I feel compelled to write in and express some of my thoughts on your latest Avengers epic: "The Crossing." I have been reading and enjoying comics for over twenty years now, and the title that first attracted my attention was the AVENGERS. Although there were other team books out there, the AVENGERS was, for me, the one that consistently epitomized good storytelling and fine artwork. I used to buy each issue and marvel at the way so much characterization and interpersonal development could be blended into stories which were cosmic in scope; and now I find myself doing the same thing again.

"The Crossing" features everything that made the AVENGERS classics: brilliant characterization which captures the essence of each hero, real displays of emotion between people who are friends as well as teammates, a deepening sense of mystery around a threat that must be met with brainpower before it can be met with physical force and the return of old allies who belong in these pages but have been conspicuously absent as of late. As I read each issue, I am reminded of the "good old days" and the great old stories: the Celestial Madonna, the Michael/Korvac saga, the Kree-Skull war. This one has it all.

Eric J. Flecken
2049 Barnsboro Rd. Apt. B-5
Blackwood, NJ 08012

Dear AVENGERS,

As a long-time AVENGERS regular, I must say "The Crossing" is shaping up to be an incredible story. Kang, Mantis (the Celestial Madonna), the return of Hawkeye, Tony Stark and Timely Industries, the Vision, the Swordsman and Mantis. If you guys can also tie in the Watcher and Proctor, I will be totally amazed.

I know the Black Knight is in ULTRAFORCE now but what happened to Sersi? Will they be back? We haven't seen Clint and Dane together since AVENGERS #255. Please keep Hawkeye for a while; he's the best. Looking forward to AVENGES #400!

J. Trim
10205 Talbot Place
Tampa, FL 33626

Sersi remains in the Ultraverse, where she ended up (with Dane) after traversing the Watcher's portal in issue #375. As for Hawkeye, look for more of the world's most bitter bowman in the months to come.

Dear Assemblers,

As a long-time AVENGERS fan, I should have known that as soon as the Swordsman returned (sort of), that Mantis would soon follow. And where walks Mantis, can Kang be far behind? I never guessed with all this talk about the temporal door that Ol' Blue Face was lurking behind it! I guess all the parallel universe hopping, Proctor was doing a while back got Kang & Mantis's attention back on the team.

Speaking of Kang, Iron Man's blackouts wouldn't be being caused by Immortus (who used to be Kang...er...will be Kang...sort of...oh, never mind) ex-henchman, the Space Phantom, would they? The blackouts seem a lot like his handiwork.

It's nice to see that the whole Avengers family of titles is getting the good shake-down that it has needed for a long time. I hear the big guns, Cap, Thor, and Iron Man (or what's eve left of him when Giant Man get through with him!) are returning to the team soon! I hope this doesn't mean we're losing any more of the current team although Mantis seems to have other plans!

Bob, Mike, Tom & all the rest, keep up the great work!!

Tim Pendergast
30 Cluff Rd.
Salem, NH 03079

Iron Man's blackouts were a result of Kang and Mantis's influence on him, an influence they'd been exerting for some time. No Space Phantom here.

AVENGERS,

"The Crossing" continues to be impressive at every twist and turn. Thank you for taking some of my favorite characters in new and exciting directions. I am eagerly awaiting the return of Captain America and Thor. The Captain's leadership has been sorely missed in the recent months. Iron Man has been duped into a bad position. Is it possible that the Force Works crew will be coming back into the fold since Mr. Stark's credibility has been diminished?

David B. Lovejoy
315 Cleveland Ave.
Wilmington, DE 19803

FORCE WORKS will be coming to conclusion with issue #22, on sale next month, wherein several characters' destinies will be resolved. As for who's left...stay tuned.

To Earth's Mightiest Heroes:

I picked up issue #393. I get home, open the cover and "oh boy!" My favorite Avenger and one of my favorite heroes of Marvel is back! Yessir! The enigmatic Mantis!

But wait! She's on the other side!?!?!? Why?! Skip the why, and at the end of this storyline, put her back in the ranks. Please?

Al Mejia
1526 West Hall Ave.
Seidell, LA 70460

Sadly, Al, there's as much chance of Mantis returning to the side of the angels as Tom Brokaw recording a music video. Mantis has been harboring a growing hatred of the Avengers for some time now, and it's going to take more than a heart-to-heart to work this out–unless she's holding someone's heart in her hand!

And now, here's the winner of our much-ballyhooed contest to determine who was in Halloween gear for our October issue. And the winner is...

Dear Avengers,

RE: Masques, Masks, and Halloween Costumes.

Gosh, kids, do you think it might be the Swordsman, first seen on page seven in the Black Knight's garb, later seen with the emblem ablaze on page 19? Looks that way to me.

I've been with you guys longer than some of you have been out of diapers. This is the most exciting renovation of a comic ensemble I have ever seen. I loved Gruenwald and Byrne's treatment of Wanda (a roughhouse right indeed!) and Pietro through the Ch'thon saga. I was delighted Mr. Gruenwald and Mike Golden gave us a necessary epilogue to the rape of Ms. Marvel (yes, Mark, some of us out here were also disturbed by the cavalier way in which the Danvers storyline had been left dangling), and introduced us to Rogue, Mystique, et al. This renovation has been long due and much appreciated.

This "Crossing" stuff takes me back to Don Heck and the merry crew drawing Hawk and Iron Man and the nefarious Black Widow, as well as the earliest renditions of the AVENGERS. Thank you all for your interest in pulling these characters back from the brink, reaching into a rich literary history, and having a great time while doing it. It's obvious somebody loves these people. I see more on the horizon.

Gotta go. I need to get this in the mail by 5:00.

Paul J Weldin
P.O. Box 181
Illinois 13 East
Murphysboro, IL 62966

Congratulations, Paul, you're the winner! How's that for service? Of all the entries, you were the first to arrive in our office, just a day before the avalanche started! (Say, do you have some inside connection to the postal service?) Suffice to say, your prize is in the mail.

And speaking of love for the characters, a hearty hello is in order for CAPTAIN AMERICA scribe Mark Waid, who will be joining your friend and mine, Terry Kavanagh, next month. No one has a greater love for these guys than Mark (and he must be a lover, 'cause he sure ain't a fighter)!

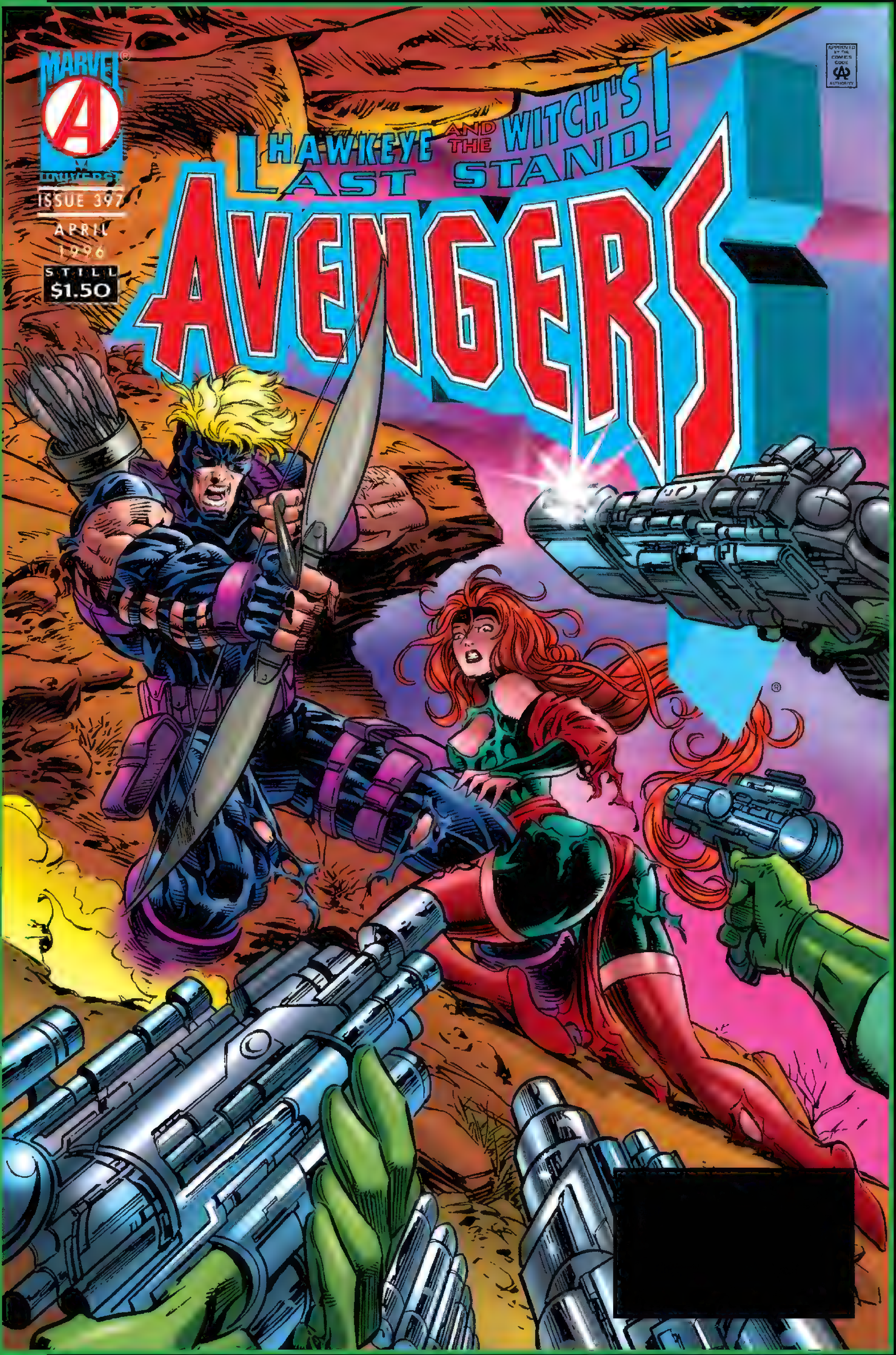
The BECAUSE YOU DEMANDED IT Dept. It seems that many of you missed the September Bullpen Bulletans which listed the results of the FAVORITE AVENGER poll and have been writing in looking for those time-lost numbers. Fret not, true believers, here's the top twenty for your pleasant perusal!

1)	Captain America	364
2)	Doctor Henry Pym	335
	(as Giant-Man)	165
	(as Yellowjacket)	88
	(as Goliath)	48
	(as Ant-Man)	34
3)	Vision	309
4)	Hawkeye	260
5)	Black Widow	239
6)	Thor	217
7)	Quicksilver	201
8)	Crystal	199
9)	She-Hulk	177
10)	Wasp	162
11)	Hercules	148
12)	Captain Marvel II	134
13)	Black Panther	127
14)	Iron Man	121
15)	Hulk	118
16)	Black Knight	100
17)	Deathcry	99
18)	Sub-Mariner	98
19)	Thunderstrike	95
20)	Scarlet Witch	89

NEXT TIME:

Something is out there, with the full knowledge of the Avengers – their security systems, their combat skills, their deepest secrets. And now, it is here. Join the "new" writing team of Mark Waid and Terry Kavanagh, plus Mike and Tom, in thirty!

In *Incredible Hulk* #426-440 the gamma-mutated Omnibus, head of the secret city of Freehold, mentally manipulated several military officials and created a phony terrorist group called the Alliance, which bombed several worldwide landmarks. When the Hulk tried to thwart Omnibus, the villain secretly restored Thor's godly might and orchestrated a battle between Thor and the Hulk. Freehold's citizens overthrew Omnibus, but the Hulk seemingly died when the military nuked the battle site.


MARVEL
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HAWKEYE AND THE WITCH'S LAST STAND!
AVENGERS

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AVENGERS

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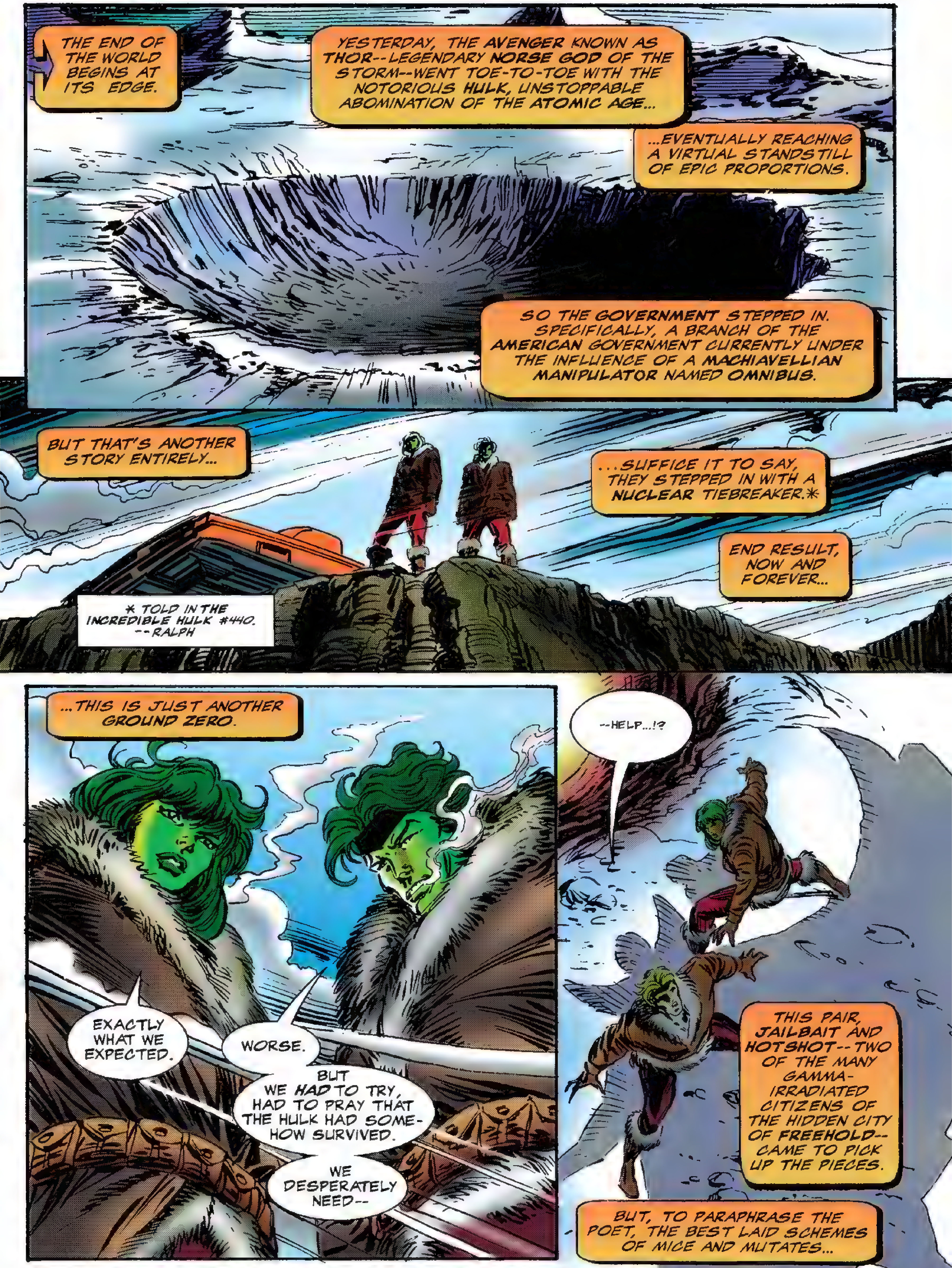
THE END OF THE WORLD BEGINS AT ITS EDGE.
YESTERDAY, THE AVENGER KNOWN AS THOR--LEGENDARY NORSE GOD OF THE STORM--WENT TOE-TO-TOE WITH THE NOTORIOUS HULK, UNSTOPPABLE ABOMINATION OF THE ATOMIC AGE...
...EVENTUALLY REACHING A VIRTUAL STANDSTILL OF EPIC PROPORTIONS.
SO THE GOVERNMENT STEPPED IN. SPECIFICALLY, A BRANCH OF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT CURRENTLY UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF A MACHIAVELLIAN MANIPULATOR NAMED OMNIBUS.
BUT THAT'S ANOTHER STORY ENTIRELY...
...SUFFICE IT TO SAY, THEY STEPPED IN WITH A NUCLEAR TIEBREAKER.*
END RESULT, NOW AND FOREVER...
* TOLD IN THE INCREDIBLE HULK #440. --RALPH
...THIS IS JUST ANOTHER GROUND ZERO.
EXACTLY WHAT WE EXPECTED.
WORSE.
BUT WE HAD TO TRY, HAD TO PRAY THAT THE HULK HAD SOMEHOW SURVIVED.
WE DESPERATELY NEED--
--HELP...!?
THIS PAIR, JAILBAIT AND HOTSHOT--TWO OF THE MANY GAMMA-IRRADIATED CITIZENS OF THE HIDDEN CITY OF FREEHOLD--CAME TO PICK UP THE PIECES.
BUT, TO PARAPHRASE THE POET, THE BEST LAID SCHEMES OF MICE AND MUTATES...

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...OFTTIMES GO AWRY.
CUTE.
PEAS IN A POD, YOU MIGHT EVEN SAY.
THE SYNTHEZOID VISION, A STATE-OF-THE-ART MAN OF PLASTIC AND STEEL--BUT A MAN, NONETHELESS--IS THE SENIOR TEAMMATE ON THIS MISSION.
AND THE SWORDSMAN, BORN PHILIP JARVERT, IS WHERE HE IS NEEDED.
AVENGERS!?
AN EXPATRIATE EX-SPY--NATASHA ROMANOVA, CODE-NAMED BLACK WIDOW--IS THE VOICE OF THIS RIGHTEOUS ASSEMBLY OF HEROES, LEADING THEM IN ACTIONS AS WELL AS WORDS.
THE WOMAN CALLED MASQUE IS HARDLY A MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING, MERELY A MYSTERY IN THEIR MIDST FOR THE MOMENT.
MOVE IT, 'SHOT--MOVE IT--
VWSH!
--WE'RE OUTTA HERE!
FWSH!
PURSUIT'S DROPPING BACK...
EYES FRONT, GIRL...
...THE HEAT IS ON!
SHH!
SHH!
ONLY BECAUSE THEIR TIMELY DIVERSION--
NOOOO!
--HAS ALREADY SERVED ITS PURPOSE.
SKROOM!

"CRAWLING FROM THE WRECKAGE"

TERRY KAVANAGH & HOWARD MACKIE writers
MIKE DEODATO, JR. penciler
TOM PALMER inker & colorist
MALIBU color separations
OAKLEY / N.J.Q. letterers
RALPH MACCHIO editor
BOB HARRAS editor in chief

AWAY FROM US, WITCH!
PLAY WITH FLAMES, BOY...
...AND SOMEONE'S BOUND TO BE BURNED.
FWASH!
HOTSHOT, WAIT!
STOP!
HOLD UP ALREADY, AMATEUR.
IF MASQUE HAD HER WAY, AND YOUR LITTLE FRIEND WERE A MICRO-SECOND SLOWER--
--SHE'D LIKELY BE EXTINCT ALREADY.
AND WE STILL NEED SOME INFO...
WHERE'S THE ORIGINAL GREEN GIANT, KID? WHERE'S THE HULK?!
AND WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH OUR FELLOW AVENGER? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO--
YEA, WARRIORS.
SOLE SURVIVOR OF THE CLOSING CONFLICT.
DR. ROBERT BRUCE BANNER--AND ALL OF MIDGARD PROPER--HAVE FINALLY FOUND THE PEACE THEY BOTH SO RICHLY DESERVE...
...THE HULK IS DEAD.
THOR.

THE GRAND CANYON...
AT ITS PEAK, THE FORCE WORKS HEX SHIP'S ONLY REAL COMPETITION WAS THE AVENGERS QUINJET OR THE X-MEN'S BLACKBIRD.
BUT, AFTER BEING SHOT OUT OF THE SKY BY AN EXPERIMENTAL ARMY WARSHIP,* AND CARVING OUT A SCARRING PATH OF DESTRUCTION AS IT ATTEMPTED A CRASH LANDING AT THE BOTTOM OF THE CANYON...
...IT IS NOTHING MORE THAN A SMOKING METAL HUSK WITH NO VISIBLE SIGNS OF ITS OCCUPANTS.
*LAST ISSUE.--RALF
UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, THOSE APPROACHING THE WRECKAGE WOULD HOLD NO HOPE OF FINDING SURVIVORS FROM SUCH A CRASH.
BUT THESE ARE NOT NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES...
...AND THE AVENGERS KNOWN AS HAWKEYE AND THE SCARLET WITCH ARE ANYTHING BUT NORMAL SURVIVORS.

AT THAT MOMENT, HIGH ABOVE THE CRASH SITE...
...ANOTHER SEARCH FOR THE FALLEN AVENGERS IS TAKING PLACE.
THIS IS THE SECTOR AT WHICH THE LAST SIGNAL WAS RECEIVED FROM HAWKEYE'S SHIP, **HANK.**
BUT I'M STILL NOT PICKING ANYTHING UP ON THE BIO-SCAN PROBE. CAN YOU BRING US DOWN A LITTLE CLOSER...?
ALREADY DECREASING ALTITUDE, **JAN.**
I'M GOING TO BRING US DOWN TO JUST ABOVE THE SURFACE. IT MAY TAKE A LITTLE LONGER TO SCAN, BUT WE'LL STAND A BETTER CHANCE OF NOT PASSING THEM OVER.
HE IS GIANT-MAN.
SHE IS THE WASP.
ONCE THEY WERE HUSBAND AND WIFE.
FOREVER THEY ARE AVENGERS.
AND NEVER WILL THEY SIT BY IDLY AS THE LIVES OF THEIR TEAMMATES ARE AT STAKE.

ABOARD ANOTHER QUIN-JET, SWOOPING SOUTH OVER THE CANADIAN BORDER...
"POINT *TAKEN*, FREEHOLDERS. IT WAS *UNFAIR* OF US TO ASSUME A CONNECTION TO THE HULK--
--BASED ON NOTHING BUT THE PARTICULAR SHADE OF *JADE* YOU BOTH WEAR SO WELL.
BUT WE STILL WANT *ANSWERS*...
A MOMENT, THOR?
HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THE PRACTICAL POSSIBILITY THAT THIS LEADER THEY REFER TO-- THIS OMNIBUS--
--MAY WELL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RETURN OF YOUR GODLY GLORY?*
* IN HULK #439.--RALPH
TO WHAT *END*..?
WITH THE EXPECTATION THAT IT WOULD BE USED AGAINST THE RUNAWAY HULK, AS IT WAS.
IF SO, FRIEND VISION, IT MATTERS *NOT*.
WE HAVE COME *FULL CIRCLE*, ALL OF US. ONCE MORE PITTING OUR COMBINED STRENGTHS AGAINST THREATS TO THE *INNOCENT*--MADMEN AND MONSTERS FROM WITHOUT--
--INSTEAD OF OUR *OWN*, FROM WITHIN.
IT DOES SEEM SOMEHOW FITTING, DOES IT NOT?
AS IF WE ARE RETURNING TO OUR ROOTS, TO WHAT THE AVENGERS WERE ALWAYS MEANT TO BE.
YET WE ARE *NONE* OF US THE SAME MEN AND WOMEN WE ONCE WERE.
AND *BLOOD* WILL SURELY TELL, I FEAR..

STILL NOT CLEAR ON THE DETAILS OF THIS *TERRORIST ORGANIZATION* THAT'S BEEN BLOWING UP LANDMARKS AROUND THE GLOBE, JAILBAIT...
...PUSHING AND PRODDING US RIGHT TO THE BRINK OF A *WORLD WAR* TO END ALL WORLD WARS.
THE *ALLIANCE* IS OMNIBUS, AND *ONLY* OMNIBUS.
WE'VE TOLD YOU *ALL* WE KNOW ALREADY, WIDOW, ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW TO *DEFUSE* THE SITUATION...
...BEFORE THE LAST OF HIS *G-BOMBS* ARE DETONATED.
YOU TOLD US WHERE TO FIND THE GAMMAS, ALRIGHT--MAYBE EVEN CONVINCED US THAT'S WHY YOU WERE OUT THERE LOOKING FOR THE HULK IN THE FIRST PLACE--
--BUT YOU *HAVEN'T* TOLD US WHERE TO FIND THIS ROGUE RULER OF YOURS YET.
AND WE HAVE *NO* INTENTION OF IT, SWORDSMAN.
THE SITE OF OUR PEOPLE'S SANCTUARY IS A *SECRET* FOR GOOD REASON, AND WILL REMAIN SO...
...BUT, REST ASSURED, *JUSTICE* SHALL BE SERVED.
AND *HOW* IS THAT EXACTLY, 'SHOT?
FOR THAT MATTER, HOW IS IT THAT YOU LEARNED *ANY* OF THIS FROM OMNIBUS...
"...IN YOUR SO-CALLED *FREEHOLD?*"

THE GRAND CANYON...
HE'S COMING AROUND, SIR.
GOOD. YOU KNOW THE STANDING ORDERS, SOLDIER.
IF HE MAKES AN AGGRESSIVE MOVE--IF EITHER OF THEM EVEN BREATHES TOO HARD--
--KILL THEM BOTH.
YES, SIR.
LOOK...I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU THINK WE ARE, OR WHAT YOU THINK WE'VE DONE, BUT I'M TELLING YOU, YOU'VE MADE A BIG MISTAKE.
DON'T MAKE IT WORSE.
THAT SOUNDED THREATENING TO ME, BOYS.
TAKE HIM DOWN.

WHOA! OKAY, SO I'VE GOT A TENDENCY TO MOUTH OFF.
IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED, MY ARM IS BROKEN...IT'S MAKING ME CRANKY.
WHY DON'T WE ALL JUST TAKE A DEEP BREATH, RELAX AND START OVER?
NO?
DIDN'T THINK SO!
KRAK!
KOFF! KOFF! SMOKE FROM HIS ARROW!
CAN'T SEE A THING!
FIND THEM... NOW!
COME ON, WANDA, I NEED YOU AWAKE NOW.
I'M NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO GET US FAR WITH THIS BUM ARM.
BUT I GUESS I'M GOING TO HAVE TO TRY--
ARRGH!
TO THE LEFT, SIR! I HEARD HIM!
BUDDA! BUDDA!
BUDDA!
TIME TO GO SWIMMING, WANDA!
AND I HOPE YOU WAKE UP SOON, 'CAUSE I DON'T THINK I'VE GOT MUCH LEFT.

THE ICY CURRENTS OF THE SWIFTLY MOVING RIVER QUICKLY OVERTAKE AND OVERWHELM HAWKEYE.
WHETHER IT IS THE COLD, THE POUNDING CURRENT, OR THE PAIN OF HIS BROKEN ARM...
...CONSCIOUSNESS SLIPS AWAY FROM THE FAMED ARCHER...
...AND THE RIVER BEGINS TO CLAIM HIM AS HER OWN.
AT THAT MOMENT, THE SAME ICY COLD REVIVES THE SCARLET WITCH IN TIME FOR HER TO WATCH AS HER COMRADE IS CARRIED AWAY FROM HER AND TOWARD THE RAGING RAPIDS.
HAWKEYE! NO!
GOT TO REACH HIM BEFORE...
...HE SLIPS UNDER...
YES!

LOW OVER THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER IN ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI...
"ASSUMING YOU'RE TELLING THE TRUTH, GREEN-GENES, THE BOMB COULD BE ANYWHERE--DISGUISED AS ANYTHING--"
--UNTIL RESUMING ITS TRUE FORM FOR THE FINAL COUNTDOWN.
MASQUE AND I CAN COVER THE GROUND BASES.
WHILE I SCOUT THE APEX OF THE ARCH.
AND IF YOU HAVE ANY CLUE OF WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU, HOTSHOT...
"...YOU'LL STAY PUT."
WHAT THE--
NO!
--AND NOW THE G-BOMB IS UP AND RUNNING!
"MUST BE REACTING TO MY PRESENCE, MY LOW-LEVEL GAMMA SIGNATURE--
"--PROGRAMMED TO CAPTURE FREE-HOLDERS UNTIL IT CAN ESTABLISH FRIEND OR FOE--"

CAREFUL, TEAM...
...WE DON'T WANT TO *TRIGGER* IT.
DONE ALREADY, AVENGERS--I CAN *FEEL* IT--
--LESS THAN *TWO MINUTES* TO *DETONATION!*
THAT CASE, 'SHOT...
...THIS IS SURE TO *HURT* YOU MORE THAN ME!
TZZT!
--mmph!--
TASER DIDN'T EVEN SLOW IT--
IT'S TRYING TO *SMOTHER* HER!
THIS THING'S BUILT TO *DEFEND* ITSELF TO THE *DEATH!*
THEN LET'S JUST HOPE *IT* CAN'T HARM--
SHLLK!
--WHAT IT CAN'T FIND!
UNFORTUNATELY, PHILIP...
...IT CAN.
UNLESS I TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MY INTANGIBILITY TO EXCHANGE ITS EXPLOSIVE HEAD FOR OUR ALLY--
--WHILE MASQUE REMOTE-CONTROLS THE QUINJET TO CARRY ITS TICKING PAYLOAD...
"...BEYOND THE ATMOSPHERE."

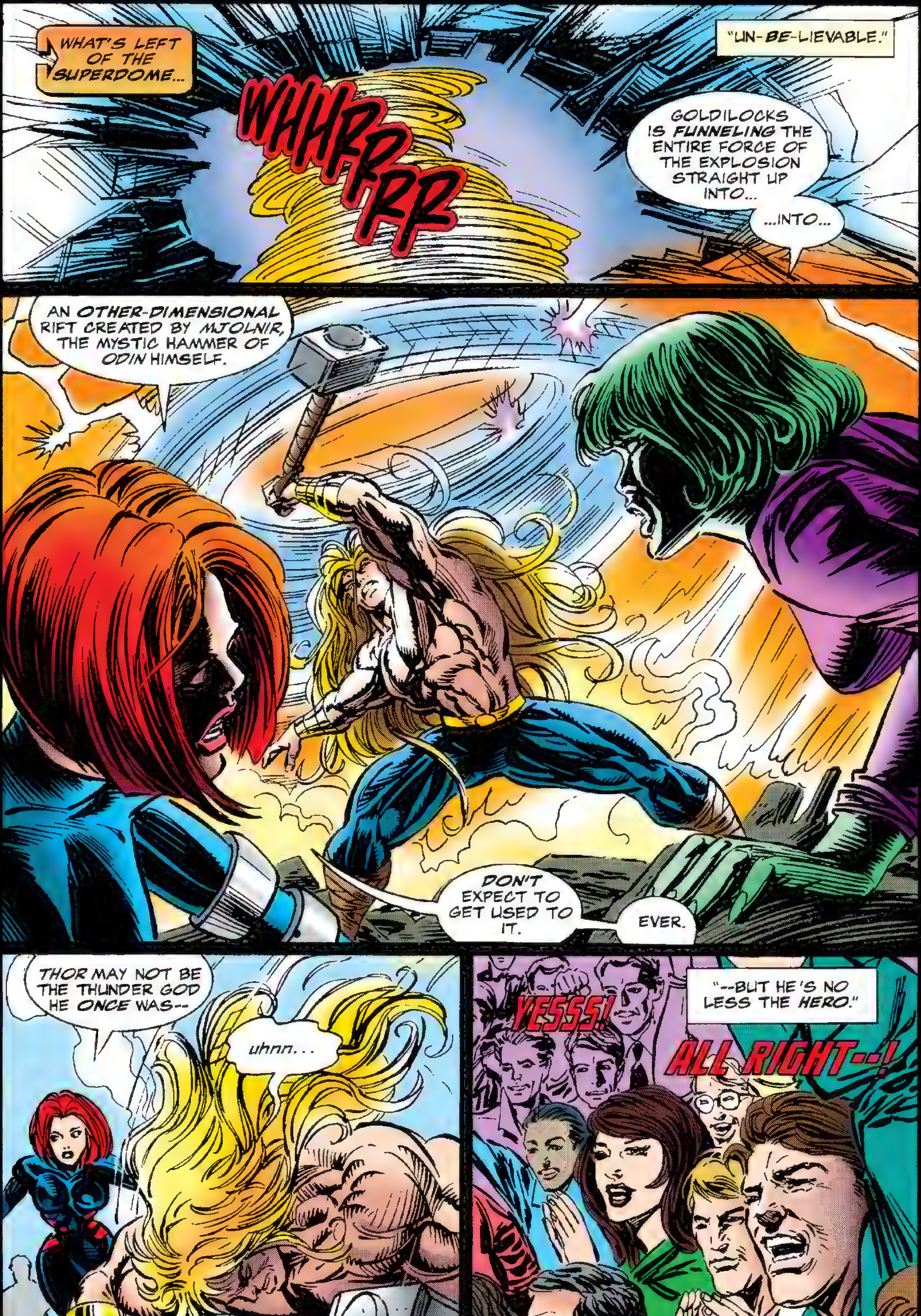
MEANWHILE...
NO!
DON'T YOU DIE ON ME, HAWKEYE!
YOU HEAR ME?
FIGHT! BREATHE!
I'M...
...NOT...
...GOING...
...TO...
...LET...
...YOU...
...DIE!
KOFF! KOFF! KOFF!
THANKS, WANDA, BUT...
...WE'VE GOT TO KEEP MOVING.
THOSE SOLDIERS ARE GOING TO BE ON OUR TAILS AND WE'RE NOT IN ANY SHAPE TO FIGHT THEM.
CAN YOU MAKE IT?
I'VE REALLY GOT NO CHOICE... DO I?

A FEW MILES AWAY...
NOTHING YET, HANK. AND WE'RE LOSING LIGHT. SWITCHING ON THE INFRAREDS.
HOW YOU HOLDING UP, JAN? ARE YOU FEELING OKAY?
FOR THE LAST TIME, HANK...
...I FEEL FINE.
AND I DO *NOT* BLAME YOU FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO ME.
YOU SAVED MY LIFE, HANK.
I KNOW, JAN, BUT WE SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN THE ONES OUT ON THIS SEARCH AND RESCUE MISSION.
I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU IN THE REGENERATION CHAMBER--WHY YOU MUTATED INTO THIS ADVANCED WASP-LIKE STATE--OR WHAT THE LONG TERM EFFECTS WILL BE.
I NEED TO GET YOU BACK INTO MY LAB. I'M NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO REST UNTIL I'VE CURED YOU.
BUT *NOT* TONIGHT, HANK.
HAWKEYE AND WANDA NEED US...HERE... NOW.
PING!
IT'S THE HEX-CRAFT...BUT I'M NOT READING ANY SIGNS OF HAWK OR THE WITCH.

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA..
UNTIL TODAY, THE SUPERDOME SPORTS ARENA HAD BEEN HOME AND HOST TO ONE PROFESSIONAL PASTIME ONLY-- THE TIME-HONORED TRADITION OF FOOTBALL--
--BUT THE GAME HAS CHANGED.
KRAASH!
"FIRST ONE'S OUTTA THE BALL PARK!"
THOR CAN TAKE IT, 'BAIT, HE'S THE LEAST OF MY CONCERNS.
IT'S LEFT TO US TO LURE THE TANK-BOMB'S FIRE AWAY FROM THE CROWDS AND PLAYERS, BUY THEM ALL TIME TO EVACUATE.
NO PROBLEM, AVENGER..
...'PEARS I'M THE TARGET OF CHOICE.
GOOD.
CHUT!
GIVES US A STRAIGHT SHOT--
"--RIGHT DOWN ITS THROAT!"
CHOOM!

MISTAKE, WIDOW.
BACKFIRE OBVIOUSLY DIDN'T STOP THE G-BOMB...
...BUT IT MORE THAN LIKELY ACTIVATED THE *FAILSAFE* COUNT-DOWN.
SKRAAAK!
A PRUDENT ASSUMPTION, FREEHOLDER.
WHRRR
CLEAR THE PLAYING FIELD, EACH AND ALL...
"...WE CANNOT AFFORD TO WASTE ANOTHER--"
KABOOM!

MEANWHILE...
RANGER-1, THIS IS OUTBACK-4. I'VE PICKED UP A TRAIL OF BLOOD ON THE NORTHEAST QUADRANT OF THE LOWER CANYON AND...
...IT'S THE WOMAN. SHE'S HURT AND ALONE.
LOOKS LIKE THE ARCHER WAS EITHER LOST IN THE RIVER OR GAVE UP CARRYING HER.
SORRY, LADY, BUT I'VE GOT ORDERS. I'LL MAKE IT QUICK.
SO WILL I!
A SHORT TIME LATER...
RANGER-1, THIS IS OUTBACK 5 AND 6. NO SIGN OF OUTBACK-4 IN THE NORTHEAST QUAD--
WHA--
KRAK!
AND LATER STILL...
RANGER-1. WE'VE GOT OUTBACK 4, 5 AND 6 DOWN. REPEAT. WE'VE--
ugph!
ugph!
SOON AFTER...
SERGEANT, REPORT. WHERE ARE THE PRISONERS...AND WHY ARE THEY STILL BREATHING?
WE'RE RIGHT HERE...AND WE'VE GROWN RATHER PARTIAL TO INHALING.
YOUR GUN AND RADIO... PLEASE.


WHAT'S LEFT OF THE SUPERDOME...
"UN-BE-LIEVABLE."
WHHRRRR
GOLDILOCKS IS FUNNELING THE ENTIRE FORCE OF THE EXPLOSION STRAIGHT UP INTO...
...INTO...
AN OTHER-DIMENSIONAL RIFT CREATED BY MJOLNIR, THE MYSTIC HAMMER OF ODIN HIMSELF.
DON'T EXPECT TO GET USED TO IT.
EVER.
THOR MAY NOT BE THE THUNDER GOD HE ONCE WAS--
uhnn...
"--BUT HE'S NO LESS THE HERO."
YESSS!
ALL RIGHT--!
WAY TO GO!

YOU DID IT, HAWKEYE...WE'RE ALIVE.
WE DID IT, WANDA. NEITHER OF US WOULD HAVE MADE IT ON OUR OWN.
YES...IT'S ODD... I'VE NEVER BEEN MUCH OF A SOLO PLAYER.
I'VE ALWAYS HAD SOMEONE AT MY SIDE.
FIRST QUICKSILVER, THEN THE AVENGERS, THEN VISION AND FINALLY FORCE WORKS.
NO MATTER HOW INDEPENDENT I THINK I'VE GROWN...
...I JUST ALWAYS WORK BEST AS PART OF A TEAM.
I GUESS WE BOTH DO.
YEAH, I GUESS SO. THOUGH I STILL THINK OF MYSELF AS THE ULTIMATE LONER.
BUT I CAN'T HELP BUT REMEMBER TONY...WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM...AND HOW IF HE HAD JUST SOUGHT OUT THE HELP OF THE TEAM...HOW MAYBE...
I'M NEVER GOING TO LET THAT HAPPEN TO ME.
WANDA! CLINT! IT'S HANK AND JAN. WE'LL BE DOWN IN A MINUTE TO TAKE YOU HOME.
"HOME"... THAT SOUNDS NICE.
YES...MORE THAN EVER, I THINK WE NEED TO BE HOME WITH OUR FAMILY...

"...WITH THE *AVENGERS*."
"FEELS SO GOOD TO BE BACK IN THE *FOLD* AGAIN, GANG--SO *RIGHT*, FINALLY--"
--JUST SORRY WE MISSED OUT ON THE *REAL* ACTION.
'COURSE, IF OUR G.I. DANCE PARTNERS *WERE REALLY* UNDER ORDERS TO KEEP US OUT OF THE BATTLE UP NORTH, LIKE THEY CLAIMED...
THEN IT'S MORE THAN LIKELY THAT SOMEONE IN THE CHAIN-OF-COMMAND HAS BEEN *COMPROMISED* BY THIS SO-CALLED *OMNIBUS*.
AND THE *ONLY* ONES WHO CAN CONFIRM THAT--WHO CAN *POINT* US TO THIS *OMNIBUS* CHARACTER--
"--ARE YOUR JOLLY GREEN GUESTS."
WON'T BE AS EASY AS IT *SOUNDS*, WANDA.
HOTSHOT TOOK A *NASTY* HIT FROM *MASQUE'S* TASER. WE'RE STILL HOLDING HIM IN THE *MED-LAB* WITH...
...JAILBAIT!?
NOBODY HERE BUT *GUSTAV BRANDT--LIBRA--*
THE MAN I KNEW AS *MOONRAKER*.
FOR NOW, AT LEAST, IT SEEMS WE HAVE *NO* CHOICE.
WE HAVE TO BELIEVE WHAT THE *FREEHOLDERS* TOLD YOU--ABOUT THEMSELVES, THEIR COMMUNITY--*TRUST* THEM TO...
...*AVENGE* THE *HULK* THEMSELVES...
NEXT-- A STRANGER WALKS AMONG THEM!

AVENGERS
THE ASSEMBLY

So much mail, so little space (really, it's becoming our mantra). Let the readers speak (about issue #393)!

Dear Avengers Assemble,

I loved THE CROSSING! It is one of the best comics I have ever read. I always save my favorite books to read last, the X-books. Lately however, I have been saving the AVENGERS family of books to read last. They have been incredible. Deodato's artwork is great, and I really love the new costumes, especially the ones for the scintillating Scarlet Witch, the better than borsch Black Widow, and the quick-tempered Quicksilver. Bringing Yellowjacket II into the story was brilliant. Although it appears that Mantis and Kang are the time-traveling twins' parents, I still think their real parents are Vision and Wanda. Remember their twins, William and Thomas, the ones that disappeared/never existed? The girl appearing with the twins from THE CROSSING, who looked so much like Luna, called them cousins! Also, I believe Tuc is Luna's soon-to-be-born brother. Notice that he refers to her as "sister" in one issue.

Moving on to other topics – it's about time Hank and Janet got back together. First of all, I know Jan can't be dead in that cocoon shown at the end of issue #393. Don't even think about killing off the wondrous Wasp; she is way too cool. So, what's with the cocoon? Is she going to turn into a butterfly? If so, what will her powers be, groovy color rays, stunning beauty blasters, and the ability to pollinate every flower in a 10 meter radius? Second of all, Hank should have crushed Iron Man for blasting Jan while she selflessly protected her friend, Hercules, a dazzling display of her leadership ability (hint hint). Speaking of which, I love the Black Widow, but if you won't let her really *lead* the team instead of stand in the background, then please let Janet do it. By the way, why is Natasha shown inside the mansion on the Van Dyne estate at the beginning of the big showdown with Tony Stark when in FORCE WORKS she is at Force Works' HQ at the time of the Wasp's ill-deserved injury? I mean, she asks if Jan is okay in one panel.

Now to the main attraction, the one between the Vision and Scarlet Witch., So which issue are they getting married in? I was hoping for #400.

Before I conclude, I want to know whatever happened to the results of the Avengers poll. I spent at least $10.00 on postcards with my picks. Would it kill you to actually show the results? It's been how many months since you requested our choices for a seven member Avenger team?

J.K. Brown and D.A. Brown
(Address not included)

The results of the Avengers poll were shown in the Bullpen Bulletin, which was the source of the contest. But, as you probably know by now, we reprinted the top twenty fan choices right here, last month. How's that for service?

Sadly, the return to love you've requested isn't going to happen – at least not yet! Janet and Hank's relationship takes a turn for the worse next issue. Meanwhile, Vision might be pining for the good old days of wedded bliss, but it looks like Wanda wants nothing to do with the past.

Finally, Natasha was out at the FORCE WORKS HQ because of...a continuity goof! We try to prevent them from happening, but when you're doing a story as long and complex as "The Crossing," sometimes things slip through. A promise, though; it won't happen again!

> **"Bob...has taken a group of underused characters and made them some of the most realistic to date."**

Dear Avengers Crew:

I remember the first comic I ever bought. I was bored during one of my vacations and while shopping, saw a rack of comics in a store. I walked up and picked one out. This issue was AVENGERS #305. Now, almost one hundred issues since my first purchase I have never felt the need to actually say "great job." Eight years after, AVENGERS is one of my favorite books and it just keeps on getting better. The lineup has stayed relatively stable for the last fifty issues and the characters are more interesting than ever.

Bob has done for the AVENGERS what Fabian did for the NEW WARRIORS. He has taken a group of relatively weak or underused characters and made them some of the most realistic characters in the M.U. to date. "The Crossing" has added on to this quality of stories and I'm extremely excited to see some major storyline occurring in a non X-book (no offense meant, Bob!), although I'm not too crash hot about Thor returning. I do collect his book, but I feel the Avengers is a great team without the solo characters in it (I never did really like Cap too much in the team).

I love the changes made so far. The Wasp and Hawkeye are not just Avengers, they *are* the Avengers. These two characters have always belonged to the team and that's why, like Hank Pym, they never seem to be gone for too long.

Deathcry is one of the best almost – members (hint, hint) the team has seen in a long while. Her fresh outlook on things over the past thirty issues has been a breath of fresh air. I would like to see you guys go into her character a lot more, investigate her infatuation with the Vision more closely, and study her adjustment to Earth. She seems a bit too at home with human culture than she should be for the length of time she has been around. How about a Deathcry limited series to do this? She deserves it.

Sersi is also another interesting question. She returned to Earth during ULTRAFORCE/AVENGERS which occurred months before the events occurring now (Dane's mirror tapping occurred in both Ultraforce #10 and issue #380, ten months difference). Sersi returned to the team shortly after this occurrence yet there still hasn't been any mention of her whereabouts. What happened to her? Did she leave the team or what? The other members could show a little care for their longtime teammate. How about exploring this in an issue of the UNPLUGGED book?

Lastly, before I go, whatever happened to the Great Lakes Avengers? They started off in WEST COAST AVENGERS with Hawkeye joining, yet when he left them to rejoin the wackos, they disappeared and haven't been seen or heard from since, and Hawkeye never mentioned them again. Let's see him rejoin them and embark on a special mission in a limited series. Those characters may be underused and weak, but with a bit of help, these characters could become pretty cool. How about it?

Peter Likidis
31 Mark St.
Hunters Hill 2110
NSW Australia

Deathcry's seeming adjustment to Earth culture is something of a cover for her fears and immaturity, as demonstrated most recently in issue #389. Apparently, her crush on the Vision is a thing of the past, but look for a deeper exploration of her character and some hints about her origin next issue.

As for Sersi, her return to this universe at the conclusion of ULTRAFORCE/AVENGERS was only a temporary effect of the time-distortion phenomenon in that story – she quickly returned to the Ultraverse after that. None of the current or guest Avengers in that story have any memory of those events, which is why they showed no concern for their erstwhile teammates.

Finally, those gone (but not forgotten) Great Lakes Avengers are still stopping crime in their hometown – and probably fighting with each other constantly!

One final note. This is my final issue as editor of AVENGERS. I'd be hard pressed to find a better group of books to edit, and a more appropriate title to serve as the flagship for those books. AVENGERS will always hold a special place in my heart, and who knows, it might not be so long before I find myself overseeing these titles again. So, it's off to Spider-Man land for me. As for you folks, please make out your letters to the new editorial team of Mark Gruenwald (who loves this title more than he loves me) and terrific assistant, Nancy Polletti. It's been fun!

–Ralph Macchio

NEXT TIME:

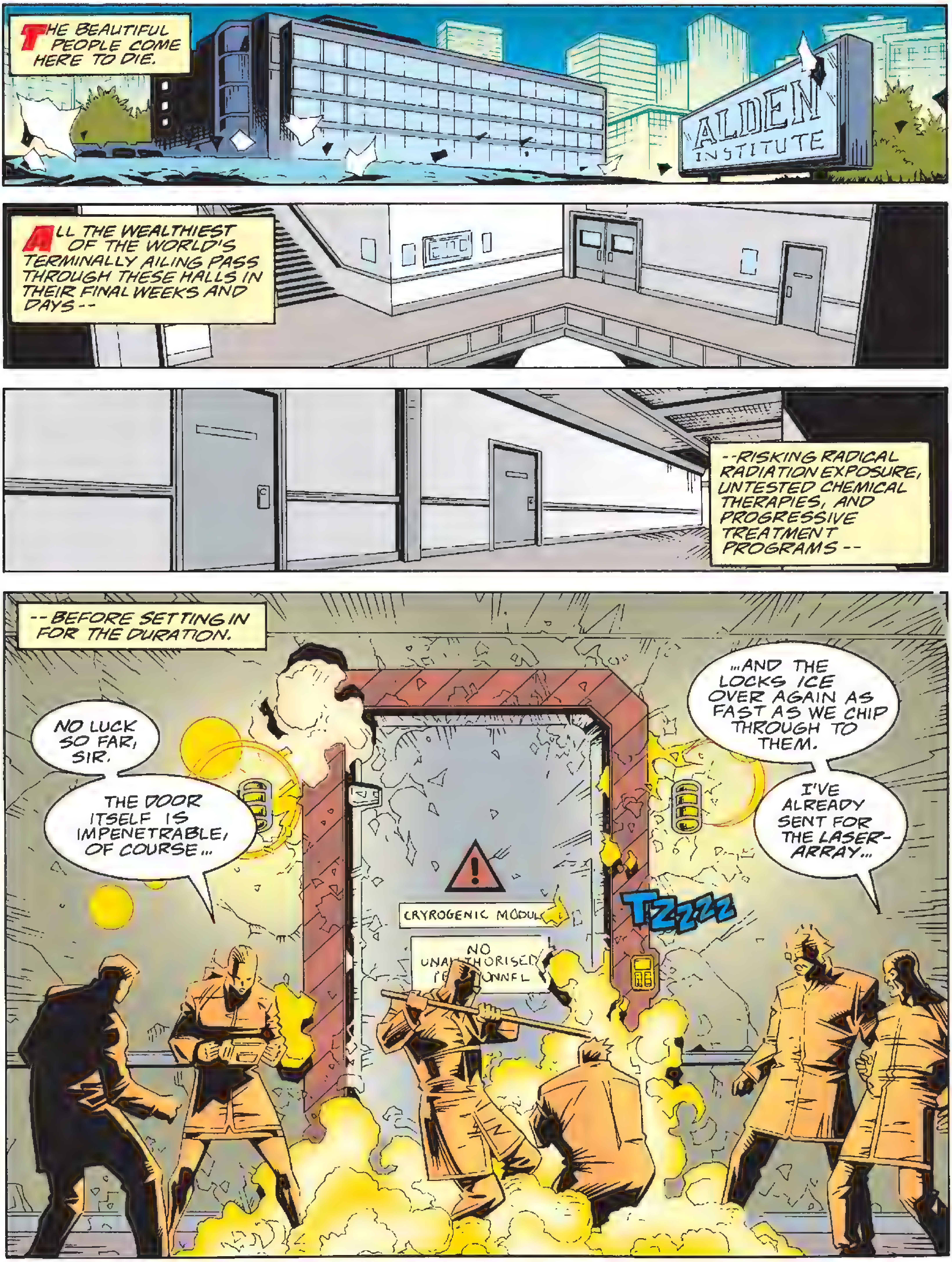
Remember that way cool story we promised you last issue for this issue? You know, the one where "something is stalking through the mansion, something which knows the team's deepest secrets and vulnerabilities?" Well, we pushed that back into next issue, to bring you the story in *this* issue, so stay tuned for *next* issue, in which we present the story that was talked about *last* issue for *this* issue. Got it? Oh, it's by Raab, Deodato, and Palmer

LAST TIME:

MARVEL
UNIVERSE
ISSUE
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THE INVINCIBLE
IRON MAN
TONY STARK...
ON ICE!
10.1995

[redacted]

A TEENAGER REBORN INTO A MAN'S WORLD — IRON MAN'S WORLD — YOUNG TONY STARK BOLDLY FACES HIS UNCERTAIN FUTURE ONE STEP AT A TIME. WITH HEART DAMAGED AND SOUL SHAKEN BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF TOMORROW'S DARK POSSIBILITIES, TONY'S GREATEST ASSET — AND ONLY HOPE — REMAINS HIS BRILLIANT MIND. STAN LEE PRESENTS. . .IRON MAN!


THE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE COME HERE TO DIE.
ALDEN INSTITUTE
ALL THE WEALTHIEST OF THE WORLD'S TERMINALLY AILING PASS THROUGH THESE HALLS IN THEIR FINAL WEEKS AND DAYS --
--RISKING RADICAL RADIATION EXPOSURE, UNTESTED CHEMICAL THERAPIES, AND PROGRESSIVE TREATMENT PROGRAMS --
-- BEFORE SETTING IN FOR THE DURATION.
NO LUCK SO FAR, SIR.
THE DOOR ITSELF IS IMPENETRABLE, OF COURSE...
...AND THE LOCKS ICE OVER AGAIN AS FAST AS WE CHIP THROUGH TO THEM.
I'VE ALREADY SENT FOR THE LASER-ARRAY...
CRYOGENIC MODUL
NO UNA THORISED PE ONNEL
TZZZZ

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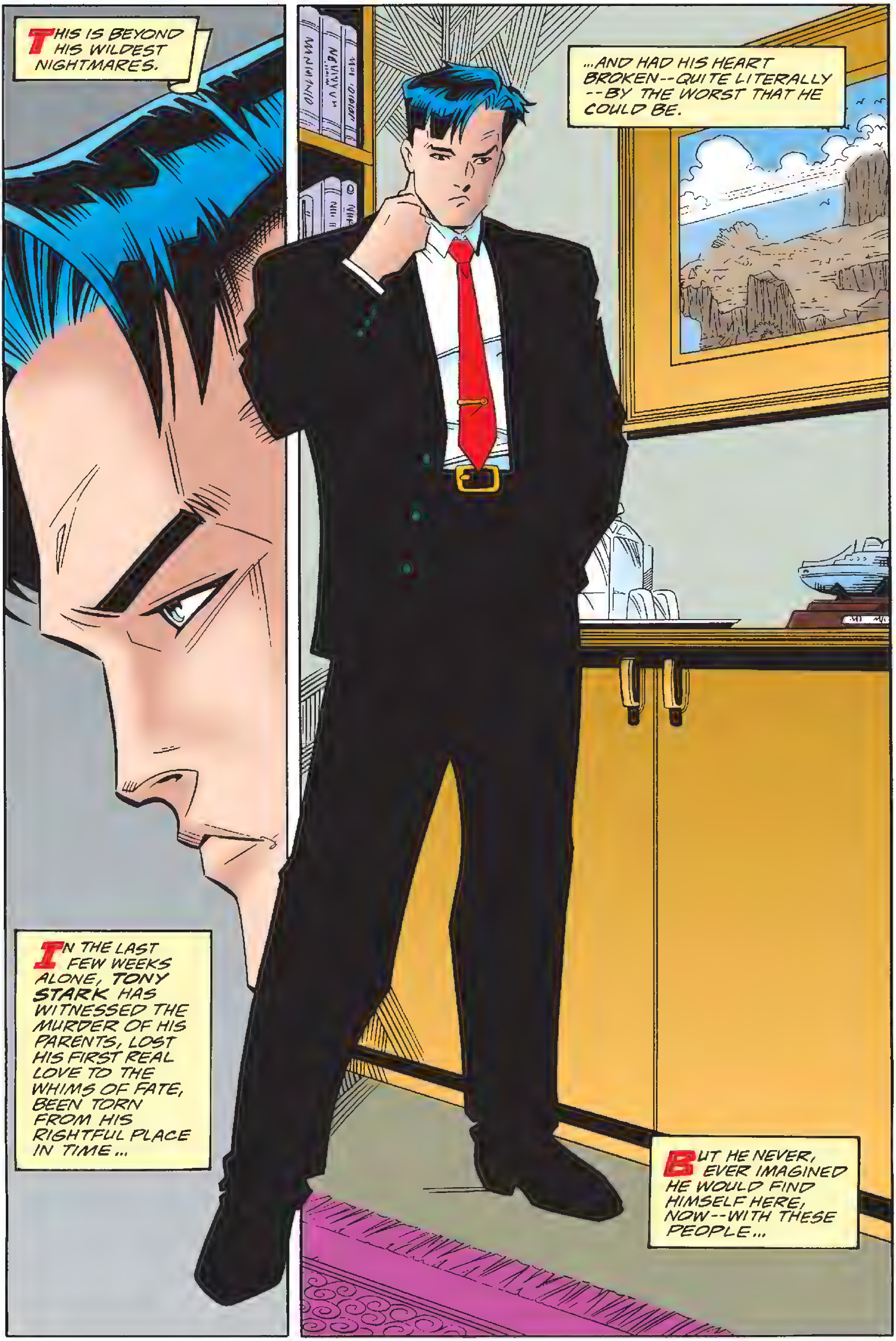
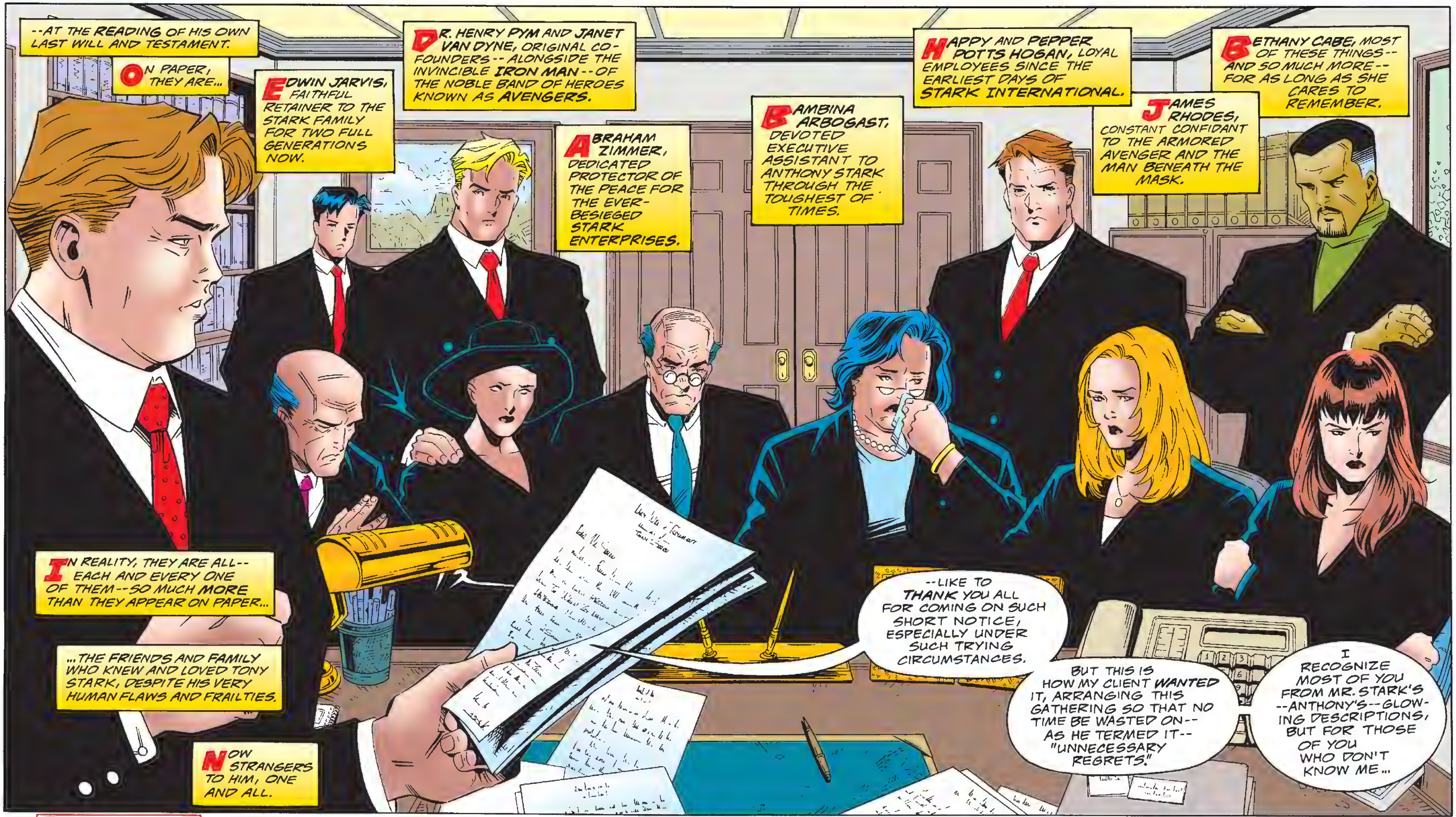

THIS IS BEYOND HIS WILDEST NIGHTMARES.
IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS ALONE, TONY STARK HAS WITNESSED THE MURDER OF HIS PARENTS, LOST HIS FIRST REAL LOVE TO THE WHIMS OF FATE, BEEN TORN FROM HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE IN TIME...
...AND HAD HIS HEART BROKEN--QUITE LITERALLY--BY THE WORST THAT HE COULD BE.
BUT HE NEVER, EVER IMAGINED HE WOULD FIND HIMSELF HERE, NOW--WITH THESE PEOPLE...


--AT THE READING OF HIS OWN LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT.
ON PAPER, THEY ARE...
EDWIN JARVIS, FAITHFUL RETAINER TO THE STARK FAMILY FOR TWO FULL GENERATIONS NOW.
DR. HENRY PYM AND JANET VAN DYNE, ORIGINAL CO-FOUNDERS--ALONGSIDE THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN--OF THE NOBLE BAND OF HEROES KNOWN AS AVENGERS.
ABRAHAM ZIMMER, DEDICATED PROTECTOR OF THE PEACE FOR THE EVER-BESIEGED STARK ENTERPRISES.
BAMBINA ARBOGAST, DEVOTED EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO ANTHONY STARK THROUGH THE TOUGHEST OF TIMES.
HAPPY AND PEPPER POTTS HOGAN, LOYAL EMPLOYEES SINCE THE EARLIEST DAYS OF STARK INTERNATIONAL.
JAMES RHODES, CONSTANT CONFIDANT TO THE ARMORED AVENGER AND THE MAN BENEATH THE MASK.
BETHANY CABE, MOST OF THESE THINGS--AND SO MUCH MORE--FOR AS LONG AS SHE CARES TO REMEMBER.
IN REALITY, THEY ARE ALL--EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM--SO MUCH MORE THAN THEY APPEAR ON PAPER...
...THE FRIENDS AND FAMILY WHO KNEW AND LOVED TONY STARK, DESPITE HIS VERY HUMAN FLAWS AND FRAILTIES.
NOW STRANGERS TO HIM, ONE AND ALL.
--LIKE TO THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE, ESPECIALLY UNDER SUCH TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES.
BUT THIS IS HOW MY CLIENT WANTED IT, ARRANGING THIS GATHERING SO THAT NO TIME BE WASTED ON--AS HE TERMED IT--"UNNECESSARY REGRETS."
I RECOGNIZE MOST OF YOU FROM MR. STARK'S--ANTHONY'S--GLOWING DESCRIPTIONS, BUT FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO DON'T KNOW ME...

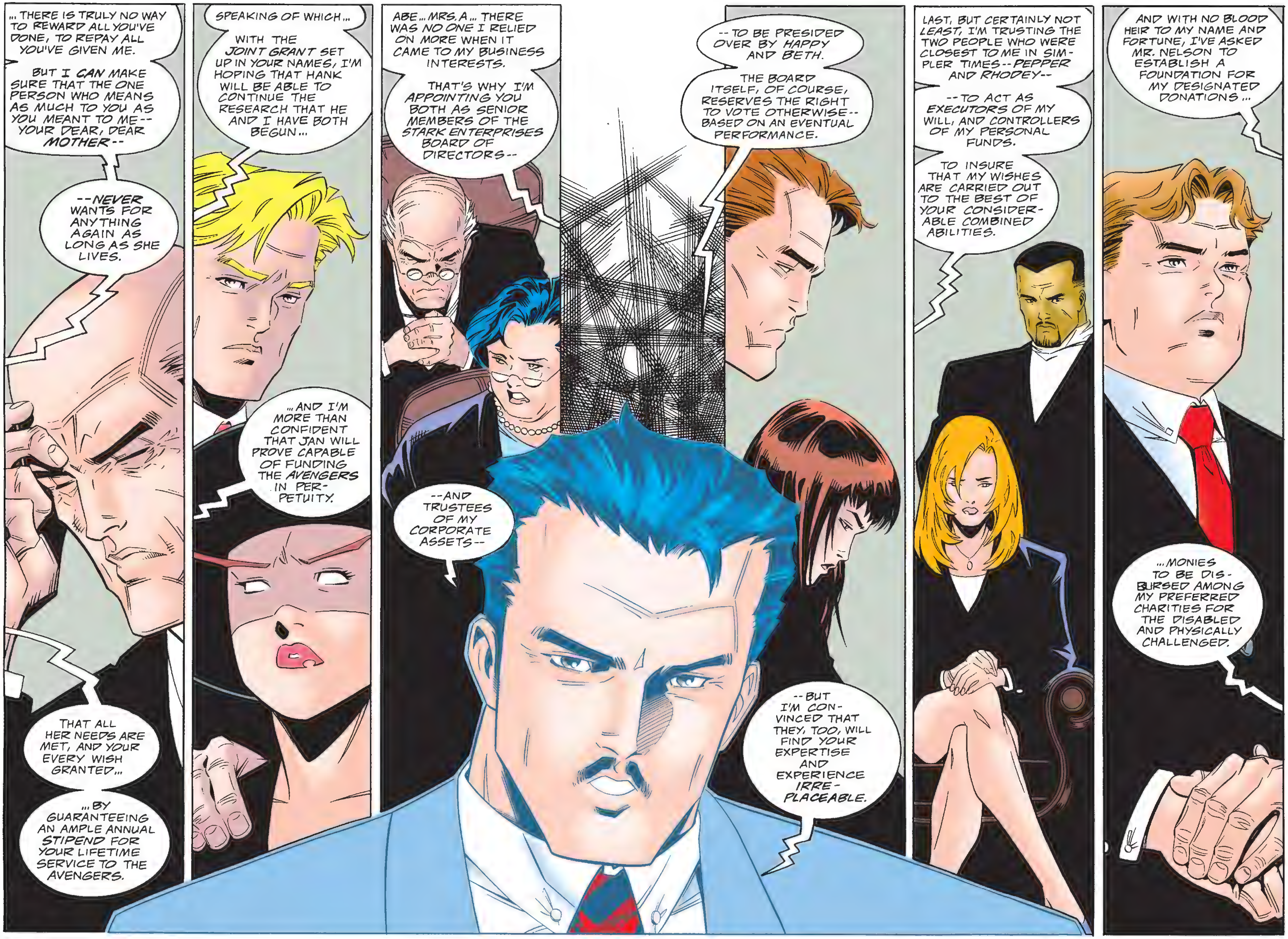
TERRY KAVANAGH
WRITER
JIMMY CHEUNG
PENCILER
MARK McKENNA
INKER
JOHN KALISZ
COLORIST
MALIBU
INTERIOR COLOR
PHIL FELIX
LETTERER
MICHAEL MARTS
ASSISTANT EDITOR
NEL YOMTOV
EDITOR
BOB HARRAS
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Stan Lee Presents...

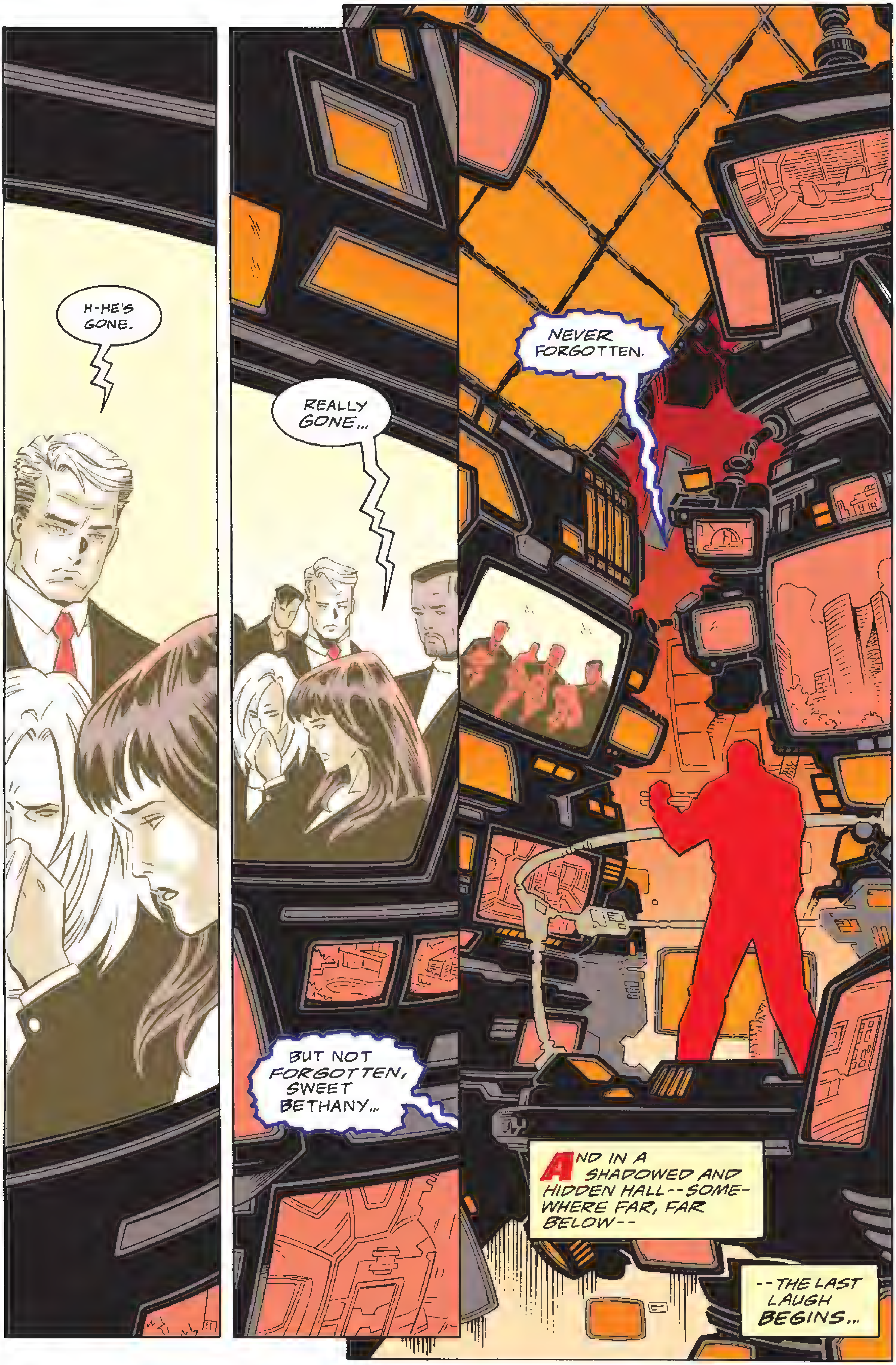
THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN

FROSTBITE!

...MY NAME IS FRANKLIN NELSON.
ANTHONY STARK'S ATTORNEY.
SO IF NO MORE INTRODUCTIONS ARE IN ORDER, I THINK IT BEST THAT WE GET RIGHT TO THE AFFAIR AT HAND...
▷ PLAY
KLK
STARK
...AS PER HIS INSTRUCTIONS.
WELCOME, EVERYONE.
OBVIOUSLY, I CAN'T KNOW HOW--OR WHY--IT'S COME TO THIS MOMENT, BUT I CAN'T IMAGINE THAT IT MATTERS MUCH NOW EITHER.
KNOWING FOGGY'S EFFICIENCY, I FULLY EXPECT THAT HE'S ALREADY ACKNOWLEDGED THOSE OF YOU WHO COULD MAKE IT TODAY...
...BUT I ALSO THINK IT WORTH REPEATING HOW MUCH I APPRECIATE YOUR CONSISTENT SUPPORT AND PRESENCE THROUGHOUT MY LIFE.
I THANK YOU ALL FOR CARING ABOUT ME AS MUCH AS I ALWAYS CARED ABOUT YOU.
ABOUT ALL OF YOU.
JARVIS-- EDWIN--
--MY OLDEST AND MOST CHERISHED FRIEND, IN SO MANY WAYS, FOR SO MANY, MANY YEARS NOW...


...THERE IS TRULY NO WAY TO REWARD ALL YOU'VE DONE, TO REPAY ALL YOU'VE GIVEN ME.
BUT I CAN MAKE SURE THAT THE ONE PERSON WHO MEANS AS MUCH TO YOU AS YOU MEANT TO ME-- YOUR DEAR, DEAR MOTHER--
--NEVER WANTS FOR ANYTHING AGAIN AS LONG AS SHE LIVES.
THAT ALL HER NEEDS ARE MET, AND YOUR EVERY WISH GRANTED...
...BY GUARANTEEING AN AMPLE ANNUAL STIPEND FOR YOUR LIFETIME SERVICE TO THE AVENGERS.
SPEAKING OF WHICH...
WITH THE JOINT GRANT SET UP IN YOUR NAMES, I'M HOPING THAT HANK WILL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE THE RESEARCH THAT HE AND I HAVE BOTH BEGUN...
...AND I'M MORE THAN CONFIDENT THAT JAN WILL PROVE CAPABLE OF FUNDING THE AVENGERS IN PERPETUITY.
ABE... MRS. A... THERE WAS NO ONE I RELIED ON MORE WHEN IT CAME TO MY BUSINESS INTERESTS.
THAT'S WHY I'M APPOINTING YOU BOTH AS SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE STARK ENTERPRISES BOARD OF DIRECTORS--
--AND TRUSTEES OF MY CORPORATE ASSETS--
--TO BE PRESIDED OVER BY HAPPY AND BETH.
THE BOARD ITSELF, OF COURSE, RESERVES THE RIGHT TO VOTE OTHERWISE-- BASED ON AN EVENTUAL PERFORMANCE.
--BUT I'M CONVINCED THAT THEY, TOO, WILL FIND YOUR EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE IRREPLACEABLE.
LAST, BUT CERTAINLY NOT LEAST, I'M TRUSTING THE TWO PEOPLE WHO WERE CLOSEST TO ME IN SIMPLER TIMES--PEPPER AND RHODEY--
--TO ACT AS EXECUTORS OF MY WILL, AND CONTROLLERS OF MY PERSONAL FUNDS.
TO INSURE THAT MY WISHES ARE CARRIED OUT TO THE BEST OF YOUR CONSIDERABLE COMBINED ABILITIES.
AND WITH NO BLOOD HEIR TO MY NAME AND FORTUNE, I'VE ASKED MR. NELSON TO ESTABLISH A FOUNDATION FOR MY DESIGNATED DONATIONS...
...MONIES TO BE DISBURSED AMONG MY PREFERRED CHARITIES FOR THE DISABLED AND PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED.

ALL I HAVE LEFT TO ASK-- ALL I HAVE THE *RIGHT* TO ASK OF ANY OF YOU--
--IS THAT YOU REMEMBER TONY STARK NOT FOR WHAT HE DID...
...BUT FOR WHAT HE *TRIED.*
FINALLY, I WANT YOU ALL-- *NEED* YOU ALL-- TO KNOW HOW MUCH I TRULY TREASURED EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU.
YOU WERE ALWAYS THE BEST PARTS OF MY LIFE...
...AND MY GREATEST LEGACY.


H-HE'S GONE.
REALLY GONE...
BUT NOT FORGOTTEN, SWEET BETHANY...
NEVER FORGOTTEN.
AND IN A SHADOWED AND HIDDEN HALL--SOMEWHERE FAR, FAR BELOW--
--THE LAST LAUGH BEGINS...

BUT IN THE DARK OF THE NIGHT --AS THE HEAVENS ABOVE ARE TORN ASUNDER--
Brighter After The Darkness
KRAKA-
BOOM
ANTHONY STARK
19 – 19
BORN AND DIED AHEAD OF HIS TIME

--SOFT SOBS SUBSIDE.
WHO WILL MOURN TONY STARK, MADMAN AND MURDERER...
...WHO WILL MOURN FOR *ME?*
THOUGHT I JUST CAME TO SEE MOM AND DAD, MAYBE EVEN TALK TO *THEM* FOR A WHILE.
PROVE IT ALL WENT DOWN THE WAY I REMEMBER IT-- THE WAY IT'S *BURNED* INTO MY MIND AND SOUL--
--CONVINCE MYSELF THEY REALLY ARE *GONE.*
CONVINCE MYSELF IT'S ALL TOO REAL.
ANTH
SEEMS LIKE ONLY *YESTERDAY* I HAD THE WORLD AT MY FEET, FAMILY AND FRIENDS AT MY SIDE.
A LIMITLESS FUTURE BEFORE ME.
HOW'D I EVER LET YESTERDAY BECOME A *LIFETIME* AGO...
...HOW COULD MY *FUTURE* CATCH UP SO QUICKLY?

THE ALDEN INSTITUTE...
LOCKS ARE FINALLY BEGINNING TO THAW, PAREZZI.
TZZZ
DON'T LET UP WITH THAT *HEAT-LASER* UNTIL--
--WE'RE IN.
CHK
CAREFUL, TEAM, SYSTEMS ARE STILL DOWN.
DOCS HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET AN ACCURATE READING FROM INSIDE THE *CRYO-MORT* SINCE THE CITY WENT...
...DARK!?*
LORD HELP THEM.
*LAST ISSUE.
ALL THE CAPSULES ARE *COMPROMISED,* EACH AND EVERY *SLEEPER* LOST.
DOZENS OF MEN AND WOMEN WHO PAID US TO CARE FOR THEIR CORPOREAL FORMS, TRUSTED US TO PROTECT THEIR REMAINS FROM THE RAVAGES OF DISEASE AND DECAY...
...DRIED OUT AND DESICCATED, SHRIVELED AND WITHERED ON THE VINE.
AND THE FOUNDER...?

HIS CHAMBER'S AT THE HEART OF THE DAMAGE, THE VERY EPICENTER OF THE ICE...
... THERE'S NOTHING LEFT OF HIS BODY.
IMPOSSIBLE.
DR. ALDEN DESIGNED HIS PROGRAM PERSONALLY, INCLUDED HIS OWN MIX OF EXPERIMENTAL PRESERVATIVES.
HE BUILT IN UNCOUNTABLE FAIL-SAFE PROTOCOLS, WIRED HIMSELF TO A DEDICATED BACK-UP GENERATOR--
AND THE REST OF THE CRYO-CRYPTS, APPARENTLY.
THESE COULD BE TRANSPONDER CABLES...
...APPARENTLY DESIGNED TO LEACH POWER AND ENERGY FROM THE OTHERS, TO FEED THE FOUNDER--
UNDER EMERGENCY CIRCUMSTANCES.
AND THIS, MR. PAREZZI...
... MOST DEFINITELY QUALIFIES.
LORD--
NOOOO!

THE COMPUTER SCIENCES CENTER AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY...
LONG AFTER CLASSES HAVE ENDED--AFTER THE MOST DRIVEN SCHOLARS AND STUDENTS HAVE OFFICIALLY LOGGED OUT FOR THE EVENING, CUSTODIANS COME AND GONE ALREADY--
--ONE LAST PUPIL BURNS THE MIDNIGHT OIL.
SIMPLE ENOUGH TO BYPASS THE SECURITY ALARMS AND HOT-WIRE THE ELECTRO-LOCKS.
NO PROBLEM HACKING AROUND THE PASSWORDS.
EASY.
TOO EASY.
WONDER IF THIS IS HOW IT STARTED FOR...
STOP.
DON'T GO THAT ROUTE, DON'T LET YOURSELF.
JUST CAN'T AFFORD TO LET ANYONE KNOW THAT TONY STARK WAS ACCESSING FACULTY FILES FOR--
BINGO.
SEARCH ADDRESS:
ALDEN, PROFESSOR
MEREDITH...
48 W. 75TH. ST.
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10023

DOWNTOWN...
AL
INST
THE STORM HIDES THE SOUND OF HIS PASSING.
HIS TRAIL IS CLEAR, MARKED BY THE BRITTLE BODIES OF HIS VICTIMS...
...AND ICE RUNNING RED WITH THEIR BLOOD.
HIS TRAIL IS BRUTALLY, PAINFULLY CLEAR.
HIS COURSE STILL A MYSTERY...

UPTOWN...
STORM'S FINALLY WINDING DOWN.
COULD TAKE IT AS A SIGN FROM THE HEAVENS THAT I'M DOING THE RIGHT THING HERE--THAT THIS IS THE ONLY PLACE TO START--
--BUT I'M STILL NOT SO SURE.
'COURSE, IF I REALLY HOPE TO CLOSE THE BOOK ON THE LAST CHAPTER OF MY LIFE--MY PREVIOUS LIFE--AND MOVE ON FROM HERE...
...I NEED TO DEAL WITH MEREDITH SOONER OR LATER.
BEFORE WE COME FACE TO FACE IN HER CLASSROOM.
SO WHERE DO I BEGIN...?
HOW DO I EXPLAIN WHY I VANISHED OUT OF MY GIRLFRIEND'S LIFE WITHOUT A WORD TEN LONG YEARS AGO...
...ONLY TO REAPPEAR, HERE AND NOW--ON HER DOORSTEP--
--SAME AS I EVER WAS?
FACT IS, A FULL DECADE PASSED FOR MERI McCALL.
SHE OBVIOUSLY WENT ON TO BUILD A NEW LIFE FOR HERSELF--MARRIED ANOTHER MAN--
--BUT MY FEELINGS ARE STILL FRESH AS--
WEIRD.
BUZZER'S FROZEN SOLID.

AND THE KNOCKER--
HELLO...
...ANYONE HOME?!
WHOLE DOOR'S FRIGID TO THE TOUCH, MOISTURE CONDENSING AROUND THE EDGES.
CHAK
AS IF IT'S SIGNIFICANTLY COLDER INSIDE THAN OUT.
ICE COLD.
MEREDITH...?
MEREDITH!?
MERI--!
SKOOM
DRAMATIC ENTRANCE WON'T MAKE THIS SITUATION ANY EASIER TO...
...EXPLAIN!?

UN--FREAKIN'--REAL.
JUST BROUGHT THE METAL MITTENS ALONG AS VISUAL AIDS, SOMETHING CONCRETE FOR MERI TO GRASP...
...BUT THE WIND'S WORSE THAN THE SLEET AND SNOW, AND THE TEMPERATURE'S DROPPING BY THE SECOND.
MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER A VISOR TO PROTECT MY EYES, MAYBE INFRAREDS TO PENETRATE THE GLOOM, HEAT-TRACKERS AND TRACERS...
COULD ALWAYS RE-ROUTE A SUB-CIRCUIT FROM MY POWER-BELT--
--JACK INTO THE MAGNE-FIELD THAT POLARIZES MY GAUNTLETS...
YEEAAA
TEK
...AND CHEST-PLATE.
NEW PULSER'S ON-LINE--DESIGNED TO SHUNT OFF ENERGY ASSAULTS AND SYSTEM OVERLOADS--
--HEART'S BETTER SHIELDED THAN EVER NOW.
HANG ON, KID...
...I'M COMING!

STARK ENTERPRISES HAS ALWAYS BEEN A GLEAMING BEACON IN ITS FIELD.
SINCE ITS RELOCATION TO THE HEART OF CALIFORNIA'S SILICON VALLEY, THIS MULTI-NATIONAL RESEARCH FIRM HAS BRIGHTENED THE WAY FOR CONSUMERS AND COMPETITORS ALIKE...
...A SPARK IN THE DARKNESS OF IGNORANCE.
< BRING US IN CLOSER. >
TODAY, A SHADOW FALLS ACROSS THE LIGHT.
WHUP WHUP WHUP
< CIRCLE THE ADMINISTRATION COMPLEX, CANVASS THE R*D LABS, AND TAKE US INTO CAMERA-RANGE OF THE PRODUCTION FACILITIES. >
WHUP
< OF COURSE, SIR. >
< BUT WE ARE ALREADY VIOLATING RESTRICTED AIR-SPACE, MR. KIRIN, PRIVATE PROPERTY-- >
FUJIKAWA
WHUP
< A DETAIL ONLY, TOBI... >
< ...AND A TEMPORARY ONE, AT THAT. >

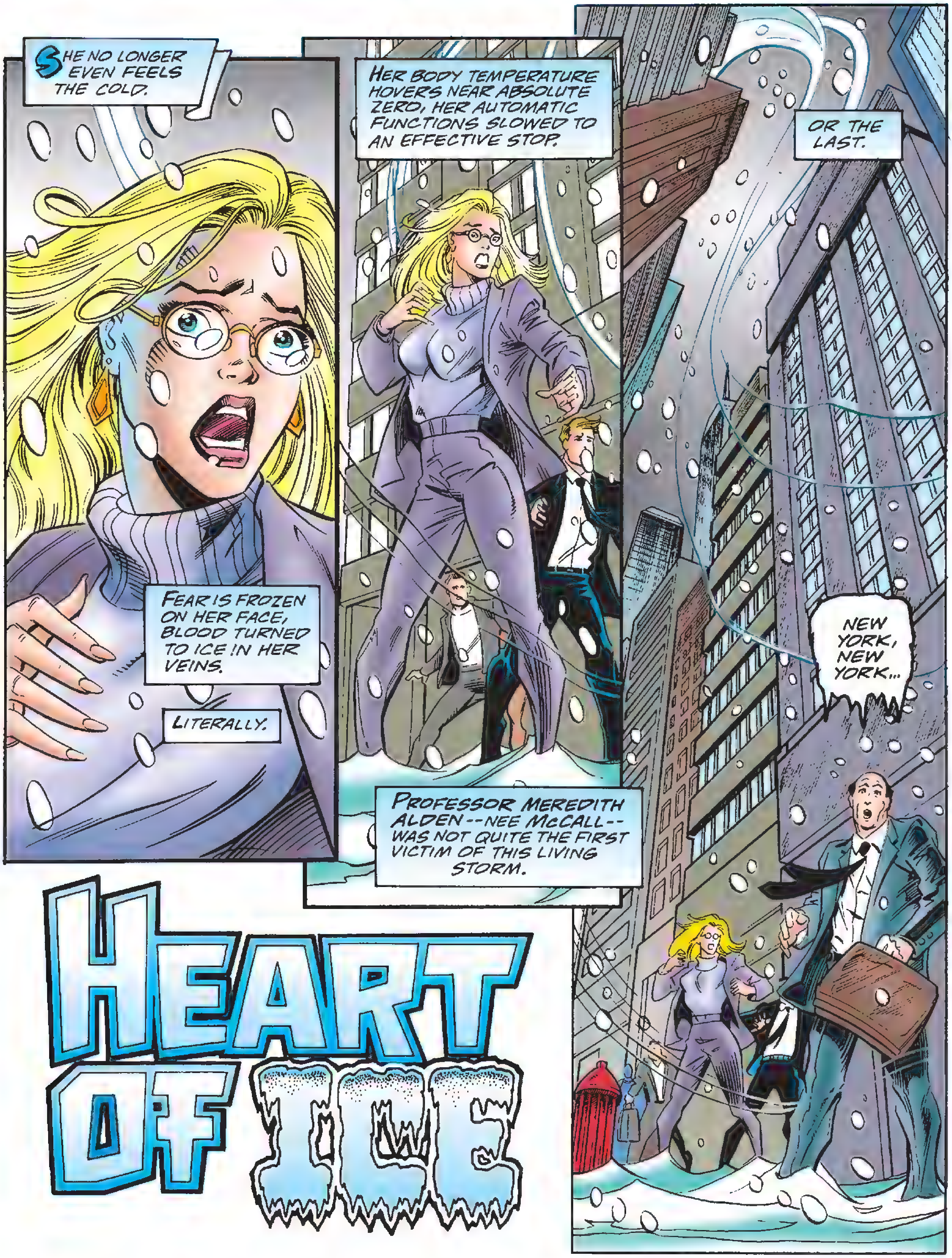
NEW YORK...
INDOOR BLIZZARD'S GETTING MORE INTENSE WITH EVERY STEP, MAKING IT TOUGHER TO GAIN ANY HEADWAY.
HAVE TO HOPE THAT MEANS I'M GETTING CLOSER TO ITS--
--SOURCE.
THERE, TWO FIGURES HUDDLED TOGETHER AT THE...
...EYE OF THE STORM!?
MERI--!
GOOD LORD.
SHE'S SO PALE, LIPS SO BLUE. AND HER GAZE IS TOTALLY VACANT, STARING...
...DEAD AHEAD.
AWAY, STRANGER.
CAN'T YOU SEE WE'RE SHARING A MOMENT HERE...?
CHT
CHT
CHT
WHOA--!
ICICLE BARRAGE COULD DO SOME SERIOUS DAMAGE ALL RIGHT, COLD-CUT...

...IF I DIDN'T HAVE A FEW TRICKS UP MY OWN SLEEVE!
SST!
ELECTRICALLY GENERATED HEAT-SCREENS.
SST!
IMPRESSIVE, I'M SURE.
BUT LIMITED, BY THE NECESSITIES OF INVENTION, IN BOTH DURATION AND SCOPE.
WHILE I...
I AM A FORCE OF NATURE.
DON'T CARE WHAT YOU THINK YOU ARE, SNOWMAN, OR WHY YOU'RE HERE.
JUST BACK AWAY FROM MERI NOW, BEFORE--
NONSENSE, BOY.
SHE'S BARELY SEEN THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG...

ZZKRK
...FELT ONLY THE SLIGHTEST TOUCH OF--
"FROSTBITE!
THE GOOD DOCTOR SLOANE ALDEN ONCE, TO MY FELLOW CHEMO-TECHS...
...AND MY OH-SO-"MERI" WIDOW ALDEN.
MEREDITH'S HUSBAND...?
IMPOSSIBLE.
HIS BODY INSTANTLY ABSORBED ALL THE *HEAT* FROM MY GAUNTLET, *SHATTERED* IT ON CONTACT...
...STARTING SOME KIND OF *CRYSTALLIZING CHAIN REACTION* THAT'S--
--PUT ME ON ICE.
GIVES YOU A CHILL JUST TO THINK ABOUT IT, DOESN'T IT...?
TO BE CONTINUED
M

MARVEL COMICS
IRON MAN
MAY '96
328
THE INVINCIBLE
IRON MAN
HEART OF ICE!
CHEUNG + McKENNA '96

A TEENAGER REBORN INTO A MAN'S WORLD — IRON MAN'S WORLD — YOUNG *TONY STARK* BOLDLY FACES HIS UNCERTAIN *FUTURE* ONE STEP AT A TIME. WITH HEART DAMAGED AND SOUL SHAKEN BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF TOMORROW'S DARK POSSIBILITIES, TONY'S GREATEST ASSET — AND ONLY HOPE — REMAINS HIS *BRILLIANT MIND*. . .STAN LEE PRESENTS. . .IRON MAN!


SHE NO LONGER EVEN FEELS THE COLD.
FEAR IS FROZEN ON HER FACE, BLOOD TURNED TO ICE IN HER VEINS.
LITERALLY.
HER BODY TEMPERATURE HOVERS NEAR ABSOLUTE ZERO, HER AUTOMATIC FUNCTIONS SLOWED TO AN EFFECTIVE STOP.
PROFESSOR MEREDITH ALDEN -- NEE McCALL -- WAS NOT QUITE THE FIRST VICTIM OF THIS LIVING STORM.
OR THE LAST.
NEW YORK, NEW YORK...
HEART OF ICE

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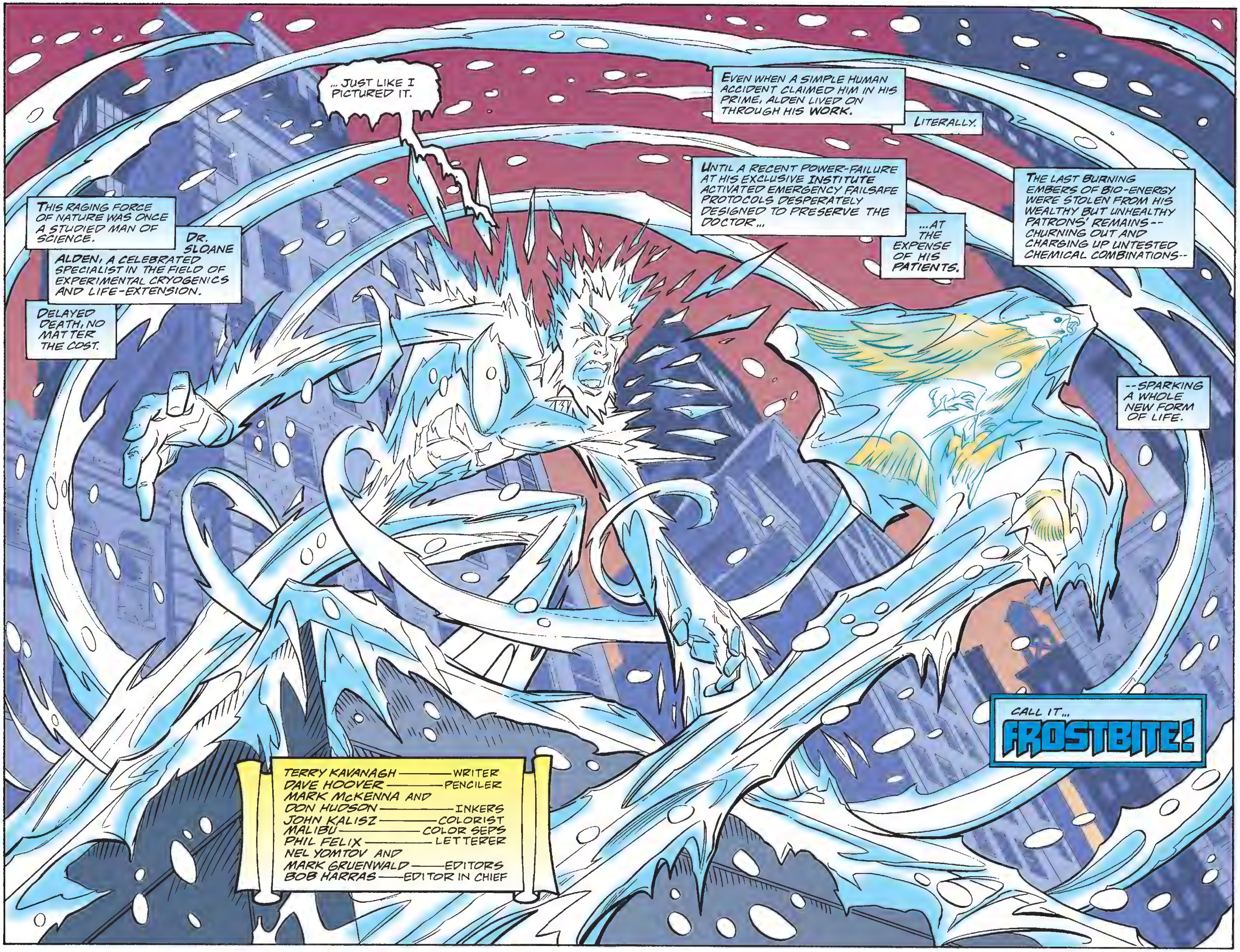

THIS RAGING FORCE OF NATURE WAS ONCE A STUDIED MAN OF SCIENCE.
DR. SLOANE ALDEN, A CELEBRATED SPECIALIST IN THE FIELD OF EXPERIMENTAL CRYOGENICS AND LIFE-EXTENSION.
DELAYED DEATH, NO MATTER THE COST.
...JUST LIKE I PICTURED IT.
EVEN WHEN A SIMPLE HUMAN ACCIDENT CLAIMED HIM IN HIS PRIME, ALDEN LIVED ON THROUGH HIS WORK.
LITERALLY.
UNTIL A RECENT POWER-FAILURE AT HIS EXCLUSIVE INSTITUTE ACTIVATED EMERGENCY FAILSAFE PROTOCOLS DESPERATELY DESIGNED TO PRESERVE THE DOCTOR...
...AT THE EXPENSE OF HIS PATIENTS.
THE LAST BURNING EMBERS OF BIO-ENERGY WERE STOLEN FROM HIS WEALTHY BUT UNHEALTHY PATRONS' REMAINS-- CHURNING OUT AND CHARGING UP UNTESTED CHEMICAL COMBINATIONS--
--SPARKING A WHOLE NEW FORM OF LIFE.
CALL IT...
FROSTBITE!
TERRY KAVANAGH — WRITER
DAVE HOOVER — PENCILER
MARK McKENNA AND DON HUDSON — INKERS
JOHN KALISZ — COLORIST
MALIBU — COLOR SEPS
PHIL FELIX — LETTERER
NEL YOMTOV AND MARK GRUENWALD — EDITORS
BOB HARRAS — EDITOR IN CHIEF

AS PERSONAL RETAINER TO THE FELLOWSHIP OF FRIENDS AND CHAMPIONS KNOWN AS AVENGERS -- AND SOLE CARE-TAKER OF THEIR HOME AND HAVEN--
--EDWIN JARVIS HAS FED HUNGRY HEROES, CLOTHED LOST ALIENS, AND BANDAGED BRUISED AND BLOODIED GODS.
ENOUGH.
MY OVEN IS IN RUINS, THE BLENDER AND TOASTER RAVAGED BEYOND REPAIR--
--DOOR-BELLS AND LIGHT FIXTURES REDUCED TO SCRAP--
--EVEN MS. VAN DYNE'S FAVORITE READING LAMP HAS BEEN PILLAGED FOR PARTS.
AND HE IS MORE THAN PREPARED TO TAKE THE BATTLE TO THE ENEMY.
I DARE NOT EVEN GLANCE IN THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMAND CENTER.
I'M SURE I DON'T HAVE THE CONSTITUTION FOR IT.
IN THIS CASE, OF COURSE, HIS FOE IS ALL TOO FAMILIAR.
GRATEFUL AS I AM TO HAVE HIM BACK, I'M NOT QUITE AS YOUNG AS--
GOOD GRACIOUS, BOY...

...WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO THE LABORATORY?
THE ADVERSARY OF ALL ORDER AND ORGANIZATION --THIS SINGULAR AGENT OF CHAOS AND DISARRAY--
--THE TEENAGER NAMED TONY STARK.
RELAX ALREADY, JARV.
SO I MADE ONE OR TWO MODIFICATIONS HERE AND THERE, COBBLED A COUPLE OF COMPONENTS, STRIPPED A FEW PIECES OF EQUIPMENT IN FAVOR OF OTHERS...
...IT'S *MY* PROPERTY.
TZZT!
THIS IS HARDLY A *LAUGHING MATTER*, MASTER ANTHONY.
AS SOON AS *DR. PYM* RETURNS FROM *LONG ISLAND*--
IT WILL ALREADY BE TOO LATE.
I'VE WASTED *WEEKS* RESISTING THIS FINAL STEP, OLD FRIEND, BUT I'M ALMOST DONE NOW.
YOU SHOULD BE PROUD, REALLY. AFTER ALL THESE YEARS...
"...I'VE FINALLY DECIDED TO *DRESS* FOR THE WEATHER."

SOME SAY THE WORLD WILL END IN FIRE.
SOME SAY ICE.
THE ICE HAVE IT.
RUN--!
FOR G-GOD'S SAKE...
...RUN F-FOR YOUR L-L-LIVES!
YOU CANNOT RUN FAR ENOUGH, FAST ENOUGH!
SUCH BITTER COLD ALREADY MAKES FOR BRITTLE BULLETS, MORTALS, AND MY INFLUENCE OVER THE ELEMENTS GROWS IN LEAPS AND BOUNDS, FED BY MY FRUSTRATION...
...BLOOMING AND BUILDING IN STRENGTH AND SCOPE!
BRATATATAT!
WITHIN THE HOUR, ALL OF MANHATTAN SHALL BEAR MUTE WITNESS TO--
--MY WHITE WEDDING!
WHAT LITTLE IS LEFT OF SLOANE ALDEN WANTS WHAT HE BELIEVES EVERY MAN DESERVES.
TO KNOW THE WARMTH OF HIS WIFE'S SKIN AGAINST HIS OWN AGAIN, TO FEEL THE FAMILIAR HEAT OF A PASSION ONCE SHARED.

TO FIND A FRIEND IN THE NIGHT.
SORRY I'M LATE, FROSTY...
...BUT I FIGURED IT WAS FORMAL.
IRON MAN--!?
BUT NOT THE ONE I REMEMBER, DIFFERENT IN SOME WAY...
IN EVERY WAY, ALDEN.
WAYS EVEN YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY IMAGINE...
AND I CAN HELP YOU.
FOLLOW ME TO THE AVENGERS MANSION WHILE YOU STILL CAN. WITH ACCESS TO THEIR PRIVATE FACILITIES AND RESOURCES...
...I'LL WORK OUT SOME MEANS OF SHUTTING YOU DOWN BEFORE--
I AM NOT A MACHINE, HERO, TO BE SWITCHED OFF BECAUSE YOU FEAR MY POWER.

YOU WOULD KILL ME TO CONTROL ME!
BUT I AM REACHING FAR BEYOND YOUR PITIFUL *GRASP*, EVOLVING FURTHER STILL WITH EACH AND EVERY...
...BREATH.
YOU'RE BLOWING THINGS WAY OUT OF *PROPORTION* HERE, 'BITE.
NOBODY SAID ANY-THING ABOUT *MURDER*.
'CEPT *YOU*.
'COURSE, TALK IS *CHEAP*.
FIRST TIME YOU TRIED THIS, MY SINGLE SURVIVING GAUNTLET EVENTUALLY *DEFROSTED* ME...*
KRR-AAA--
*AFTER THE END OF LAST ISSUE.

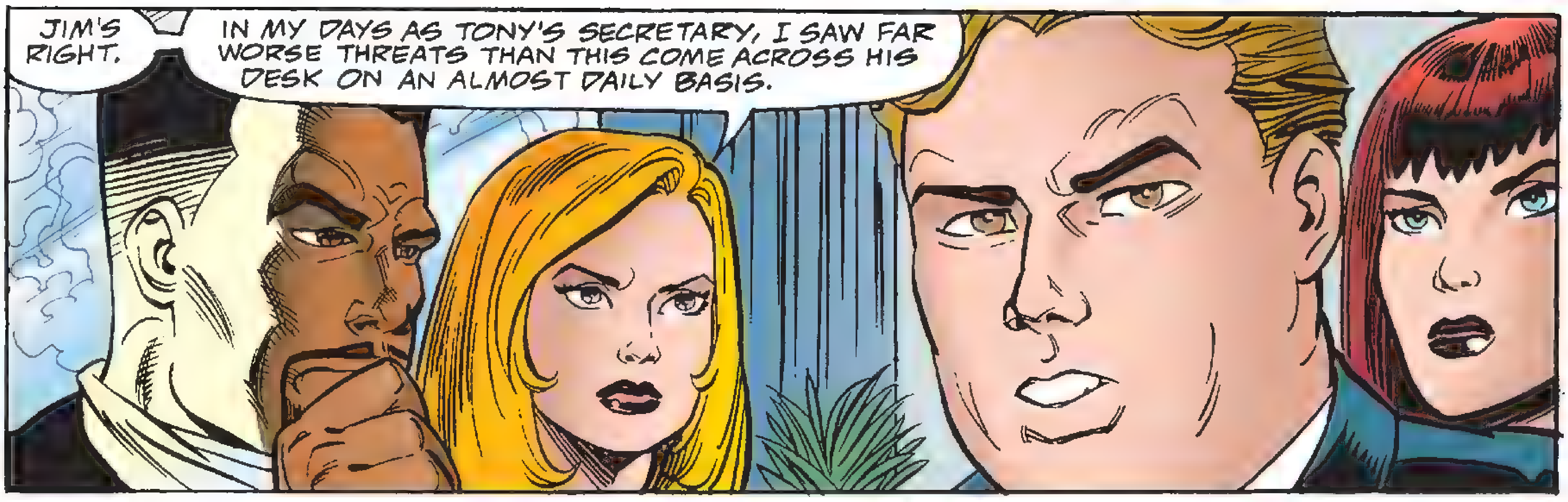
--RR--AAK!
...AND YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHING YET!
I KNOW YOU NOW.
THE BOY WHO CHALLENGED ME FOR MEREDITH'S HAND.
BEFORE I HAD EVEN BEGUN TO REALIZE MY TRUE POTENTIAL...
...BEFORE I HAD EARNED AND LEARNED COMMAND OF THE WILD WINTER WINDS.
WHHSSH
THE FIRST TIME...?
BEFORE I ADDED GYRO-STABILIZERS TO THE ENSEMBLE, POPSICLE.
URRM!

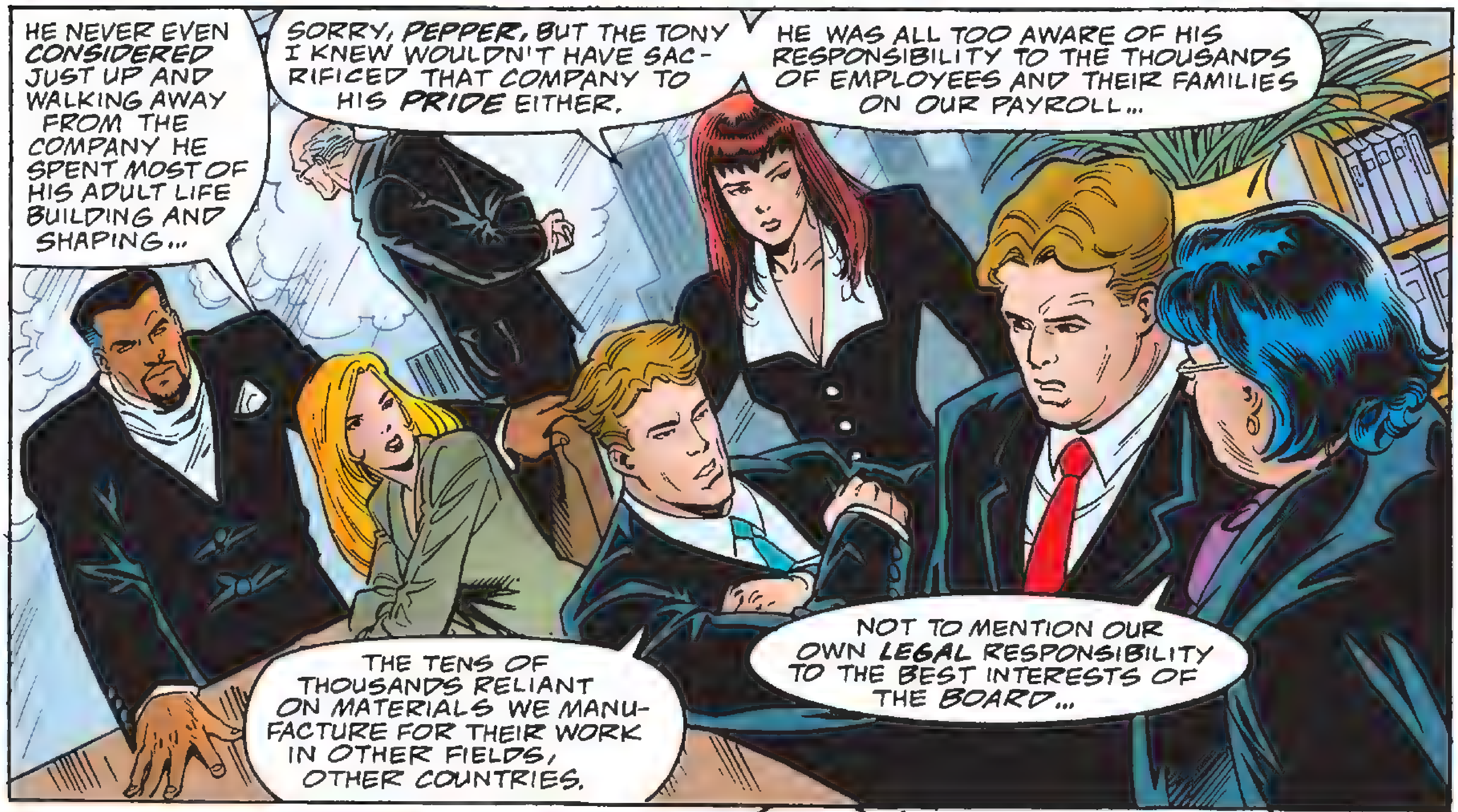
WHSSH
MAN AGAINST NATURE UNLEASHED, BOY.
PLACE YOUR BETS.
MAN AND MACHINE, FROSTBITE.
I BUILT IN A LITTLE EXTRA KICK JUST FOR THIS OCCASION.
INTEGRATED HYPER-THRUST, PATENT PENDING.
CHOOM
OLD NEWS, TIN-SKIN.
NOTHING MORE THAN TYPICAL TECHNO-BABBLE--
--THROWN RIGHT BACK AT YOU!
CHT
CHT
CHT
HIGH-SPEED HAILSTORM CAN'T HURT WHAT IT CAN'T HIT, ICE-CUBE!
NEW HEAD-CASE INSTANTLY, AUTOMATICALLY SECURES HELMET INTEGRITY...
...AND THE SAME THERMA-SCREEN THAT SHIELDED ME SO WELL LAST TIME--
HSS
HSSS

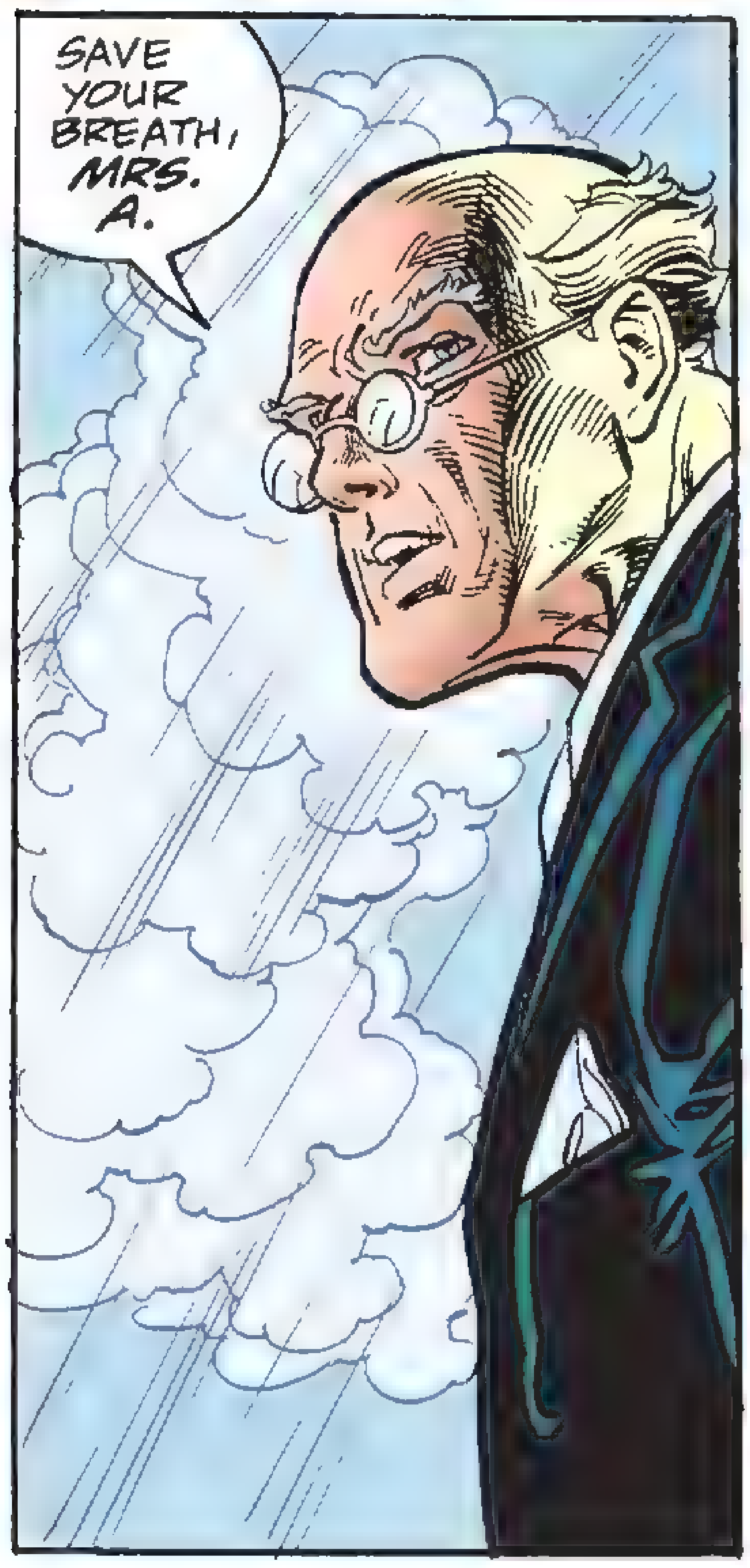
COMBINATION OF FULL-RANGE DISPERSAL...
...AND FINE-FOCUS LASERS--
--NOW GIVES AS GOOD AS I GET!
HMMM
AMOUNTS TO NOTHING AGAINST AN ELEMENTAL IN THE MAKING.
TZZZ
QUIET COLD HAS EVER PRESERVED WHAT HARSH HEAT WOULD DESTROY.
BUT MY LITTLE HOT-FLASH DID HAVE AN EFFECT, I'M SURE OF THAT.
ALMOST AS IF ALDEN'S BODY INSTINCTIVELY PROCESSED IT SOMEHOW--FOUND A WAY TO USE THE HEIGHTENED KINETIC ENERGIES OF THE HEATWAVE--
--TO ARREST HIS MUTATION MOMENTARILY.
COLD CORRUPTS HEAT, IRON LADDIE...
...WHITTLING AND WEARING AWAY AT SUCH FRAGILE FLAME.
SO LET'S TRY A SLIGHTLY LESS DIRECT APPROACH.
SUSTAINED MICROWAVE PULSE--DIRECTED AT THE NETWORK OF STEAM-PIPES BENEATH THE STREETS--

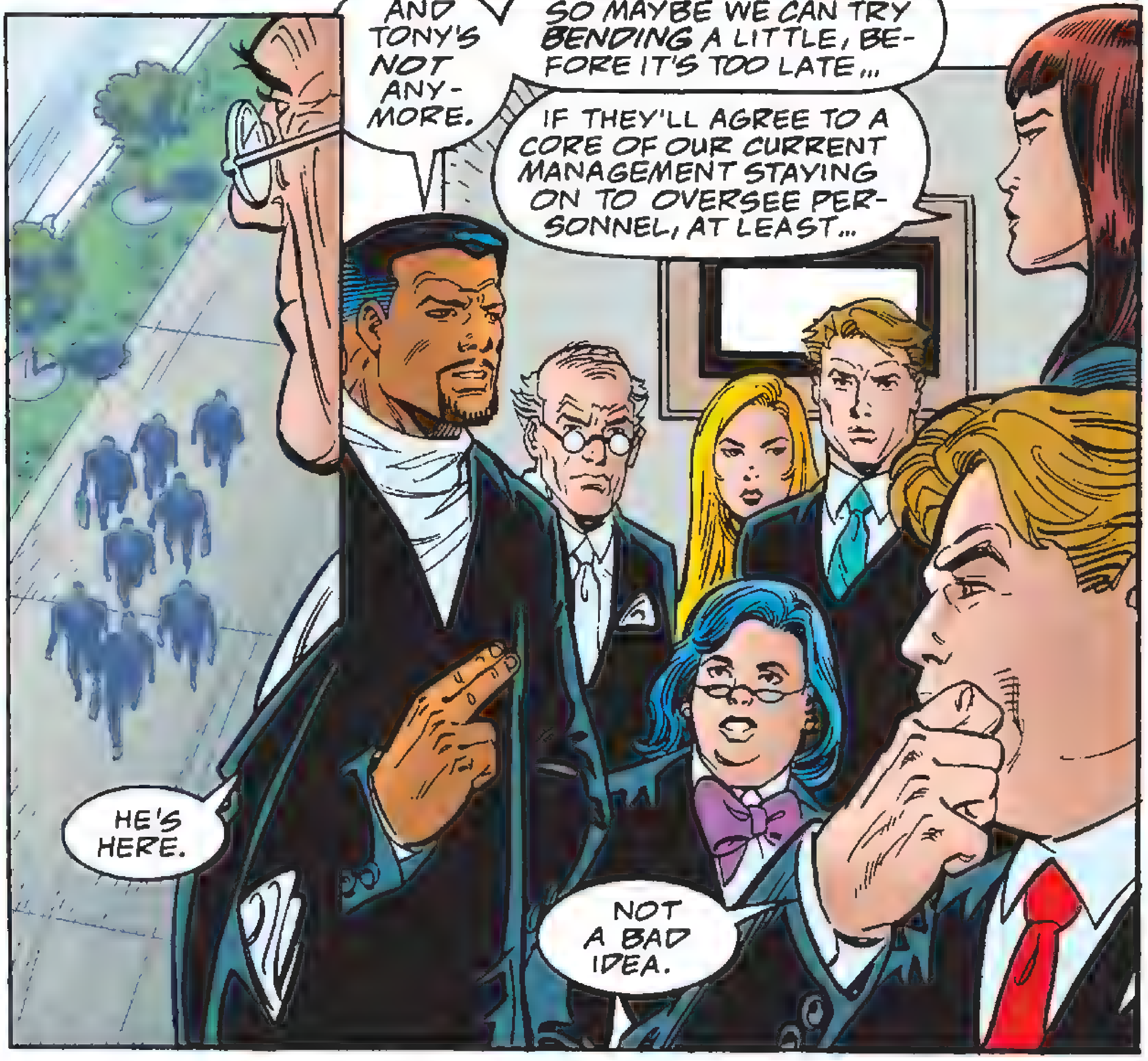
--SHOULD BRING THINGS RIGHT TO A BOIL.
SHMMM
SHMMM
OF COURSE, ABSOLUTE COLD...
SHMMM
...CORRUPTS ABSOLUTELY!
UH-OH.

THREE THOUSAND MILES DUE WEST, SUNSHINE AND WARMTH ARE THE WORDS OF THE DAY.
EVERY DAY.
OUTSIDE, AT LEAST.
WITHIN THE CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS OF THE MULTI-NATIONAL CONGLOMERATE KNOWN AS STARK ENTERPRISES, HOWEVER--
--SPECIFICALLY, THE OFFICE OF THE ERST-WHILE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD AND PRESIDENT, ANTHONY STARK HIMSELF--
--DOOM AND GLOOM REIGN SUPREME.
THIS IS GETTING US NOWHERE, HAP...
...EVEN FASTER THAN USUAL, IN FACT.
POINT TAKEN, MR. AND MRS. HOGAN.
TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE NOW. HE'LL BE ARRIVING ANY MINUTE, AND WE STILL HAVEN'T--
GIVE IT UP, FOGGY, WE WON'T BREAK ON THIS ONE.
STARK WOULD NEVER HAVE FOLDED WITHOUT A FIGHT, YOU ALL KNOW THAT.


JIM'S RIGHT.
IN MY DAYS AS TONY'S SECRETARY, I SAW FAR WORSE THREATS THAN THIS COME ACROSS HIS DESK ON AN ALMOST DAILY BASIS.

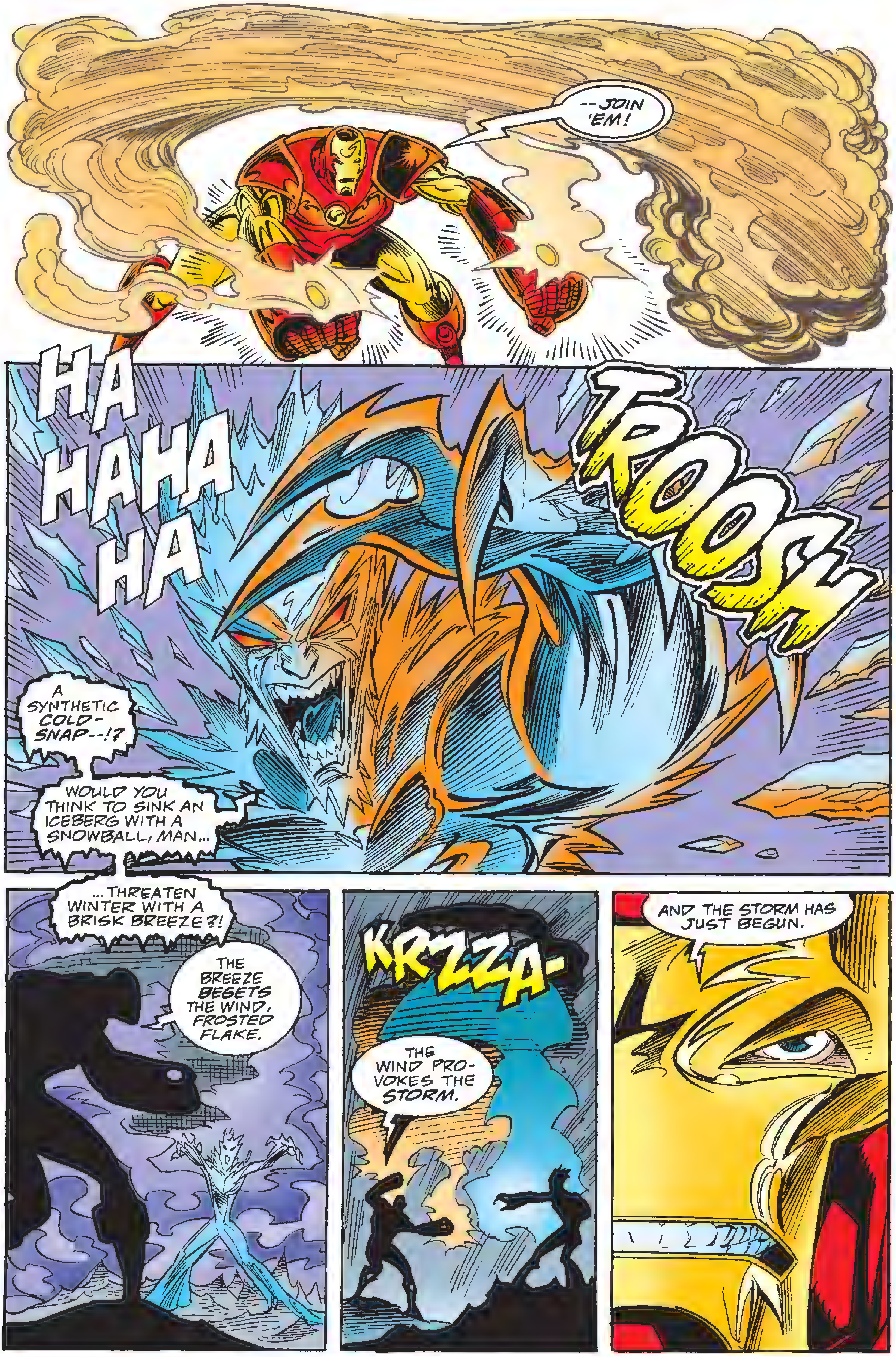

HE NEVER EVEN CONSIDERED JUST UP AND WALKING AWAY FROM THE COMPANY HE SPENT MOST OF HIS ADULT LIFE BUILDING AND SHAPING...
SORRY, PEPPER, BUT THE TONY I KNEW WOULDN'T HAVE SACRIFICED THAT COMPANY TO HIS PRIDE EITHER.
HE WAS ALL TOO AWARE OF HIS RESPONSIBILITY TO THE THOUSANDS OF EMPLOYEES AND THEIR FAMILIES ON OUR PAYROLL...
THE TENS OF THOUSANDS RELIANT ON MATERIALS WE MANUFACTURE FOR THEIR WORK IN OTHER FIELDS, OTHER COUNTRIES.
NOT TO MENTION OUR OWN LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY TO THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE BOARD...


SAVE YOUR BREATH, MRS. A.


AND TONY'S NOT ANYMORE.
SO MAYBE WE CAN TRY BENDING A LITTLE, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE...
IF THEY'LL AGREE TO A CORE OF OUR CURRENT MANAGEMENT STAYING ON TO OVERSEE PERSONNEL, AT LEAST...
HE'S HERE.
NOT A BAD IDEA.

GUARANTEED HIRING AND FIRING PRIVILEGES, A FAILSAFE POSITION TO PROTECT THE OLD WORKFORCE FROM THE NEW...
IT'S ALL HERE IN MY FINAL VERSION OF THE CONTRACT.
VERY IMPRESSIVE, COUNSELOR NELSON.
TONY STARK'S FAITH IN YOU WAS WELL WARRANTED.
'PRECIATE THE THOUGHT, MS. CABE.
I THINK THE SAME COULD BE SAID...
...FOR ALL HIS FRIENDS AND FAMILY.
DUTY CALLS NOW, PEOPLE.
AND IT FALLS TO ME TO FINALLY INTRODUCE YOU TO THE FUTURE OF STARK ENTERPRISES--
--MR. YU KIRIN, C.E.O. OF FUJIKAWA INTERNATIONAL.

NEW YORK...
BLIZZARD'S TAKEN ON A VICIOUS LIFE OF ITS OWN AT THIS POINT.
SENSORS CAN BARELY DISTINGUISH FROSTBITE FROM THE SLEET AND SNOW AT HIS FINGERTIPS, THE WINDS HE WIELDS...
...NOT SURE I COULD STOP HIM NOW, EVEN IF I REACH HIM.
BUT IF THERE'S ANY CHANCE MERI'S STILL ALIVE, ANY CHANCE AT ALL OF PULLING HER THROUGH THIS NIGHTMARE...
NO CHOICE, REALLY.
FRZZZ
IF YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM--
FRZZZ


--JOIN 'EM!
HA HAHA HA
TROOSH
A SYNTHETIC COLD-SNAP--!?
WOULD YOU THINK TO SINK AN ICEBERG WITH A SNOWBALL, MAN...
...THREATEN WINTER WITH A BRISK BREEZE?!
THE BREEZE BEGETS THE WIND, FROSTED FLAKE.
KRZZA-
THE WIND PROVOKES THE STORM.
AND THE STORM HAS JUST BEGUN.

EXTREME COLD...
...MEETS COLDER.
FRZZ
TOOM
CURRENTS OF CRISP, CHILLED AIR COLLIDE AND CRASH...
...WITH A VENGEANCE ONCE THOUGHT RESERVED FOR WEATHER-GODS AT WAR.
THEIR WORDS ARE FIRST LOST TO THE WHIPPING WINDS.
SUB-ZERO FRONTS SOON SURGE AND SWELL UNCHECKED, HOWEVER--GUSTS GROW INTO GALES, FRIGID BECOMES FROZEN--
SHWHOOOM
--AND CONTROL ITSELF IS FINALLY TORN FROM THEIR GRASP.
THE STORM IS ALL.

BUT EACH AND EVERY SAVAGE STORM EVENTUALLY SUFFERS THE SAME SAD FATE.
IT PASSES.
CONSUMED BY ITS OWN FURY.
IRON MAN...?
HANG BACK, OFFICERS.
FROM ALL INDICATIONS, FROSTBITE ANIMATES HIMSELF BY LEECHING AMBIENT HEAT-ENERGY FROM HIS SURROUNDINGS...
...FROM ANYTHING AND EVERYONE.
I'VE ALREADY RADIOED THE AVENGERS FOR AN INSULATED CONTAINMENT UNIT.
I'M MORE CONCERNED WITH HIS VICTIMS NOW.

MOST OF THESE FOLKS ARE IN *SHOCK*, HERO, SOME MORE SERIOUS THAN OTHERS.
THEY'LL *SURVIVE* IF WE CAN GET THEM TO THE HOSPITAL IN TIME.
THANK HEAVENS FOR THAT, AT LEAST.
BUT MEREDITH'S BEEN "SUSPENDED" FOR MUCH *LONGER* THAN ANY OF THE OTHERS. HER PULSE IS SO FAINT ALREADY, GETTING FAINTER...
...SLOWED TO AN EFFECTIVE STOP.
SHE CAN'T *AFFORD* ANY MORE DELAYS.
IT'S RISKY, I ADMIT, BUT I JUST MIGHT BE ABLE TO *STIMULATE* HER BLOOD-FLOW THERMODYNAMICALLY...
...RESTORING HER CIRCULATION RIGHT HERE AND NOW.
NEED TO MONITOR HER LIFE-SIGNS EVERY STEP OF THE WAY, THOUGH.
CAN'T BE *TOO* CAREFUL, TOO DELICATE, WITH A SYSTEM AS FRAGILE AS THE HUMAN BODY.
HEARTBEAT'S STARTING TO PICK UP THE PACE NOW.
ERRATIC, UNSTEADY, BUT...
...SHE'S ALIVE.

THE NEXT EVENING...
THE COLUMBIA CAMPUS IS BEAUTIFUL INDEED, MASTER ANTHONY--
--NOTHING SHORT OF AN OASIS IN THE HEART OF OUR CONCRETE DESERT--
--BUT I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU WOULD FIND IT NECESSARY TO LIVE HERE AT THE UNIVERSITY.
THE STARK TOWNHOUSE WAS AND IS YOUR HOME, WHERE WARM FRIENDS AND A HOT MEAL ALWAYS AWAIT.
STARK TOWNHOUSE IS AVENGERS MANSION NOW, JARV, HOME TO GODS AND LIVING LEGENDS.
THE AVENGERS MAY FEEL LIKE THEY KNOW ME-- THE OTHER, OLDER ME, AT LEAST--
--BUT WITH THE SINGLE EXCEPTION OF YOU, OLD FRIEND, EVERY RESIDENT OF THAT HOUSE IS A TOTAL STRANGER TO ME.
AND IF IT'S LAST NIGHT'S SKIRMISH WITH FROSTBITE THAT'S PROMPTING THIS LITTLE WORRY-FEST OF YOURS...
...I LIKE TO THINK I PROVED SOMETHING--TO YOU AND ME BOTH--ABOUT TAKING CARE OF MYSELF.
YOUR ABILITY TO HANDLE A CRISIS, YOUR COURAGE IN THE FACE OF DANGER, WERE NEVER IN DOUBT FOR A MOMENT.
YOU ARE YOUR FATHER'S SON, YOUNG MAN.

IT'S THE *LITTLE* THINGS THAT SHOULD CONCERN YOU, THE DAY-TO-DAY TRIBULATIONS.
A VERY REAL VULNERABILITY TO TEMPTATION AND ARROGANCE, A SEEMING INABILITY TO--
JUST SAY *NO.*
SINCE THE *TIMESLIDE,* I'VE HEARD ABOUT NOTHING *BUT* THIS SUPPOSED *SWORD OF DAMOCLES* HANGING OVER MY FUTURE.
NOK NOK
MY SO-CALLED TENDENCY TOWARD UNHEALTHY *ADDICTION,* 'SPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL AND--
--WOMEN.
LET'S *MOVE,* SPORT.
UHM... JARVIS, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET--
--KRIS DeGANN.
PLEASURE, JARV.
SORRY TO CUT AND RUN WITH YOUR BOY LIKE THIS, BUT FRAT RUSH ONLY LASTS A WEEK...
...AND THE FIRST BEER BASH OF THE SEMESTER STARTED OVER AN HOUR AGO!
GODSPEED, MASTER ANTHONY.
AND GOD HELP YOU.
NEXT: FIRST MISTAKE!

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THOR® AND THE WASP™ FIND MAYHEM IN THE MANSION!
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[redacted]

AVENGERS MANSION...
...THE WITCHING HOUR...
ALL IS SILENT IN THE HALLS OF THE EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES' HOME AND HEADQUARTERS...
...BUT ALL IS FAR FROM STILL.
THIS IS MASQUE...
...A WOMAN OF POWER... OF PURPOSE...
LET HIM GET "TOO CLOSE."
MAKE HIM THINK HE'S *BLOWN MY COVER"...
KRAK!
uh-uh, TOOTS-- THERE'S NO ESCAPE THIS TIME!
UNNGH! $#*%!! TRACER ARROW!
TWO SHOTS TO TAKE HIM OUT--
--LEFT EYE--LEFT WRIST.
STEADY NOW...
WHOK!
NOOO!

CLINT BARTON HAS ALWAYS HAD A KNACK FOR MAKING HIS MARK.
BEST KNOWN AS HAWKEYE...
...THE AVENGERS' ACE ARCHER CAN SHUT OUT THE REST OF THE WORLD...
...FOCUS ON NOTHING BUT HIS TARGET...
...AND SCORE A BULLSEYE VERY NEARLY EVERY TIME.
CASE IN POINT...
TOO LATE, BABE--
--YOU'RE BUSTED!
MAYBE SO, MARKSMAN...

STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY AVENGERS IN...

PARANORMAL ACTIVITY

TERRY KAVANAGH & BEN RAAB – STORY
BEN RAAB SCRIPT * MIKE DEODATO, JR. PENCILS * TOM PALMER INKS
BILL OAKLEY LETTERS * MALIBU COLOR SEPS * JOHN KALISZ COLORS
MARK GRUENWALD EDITOR * BOB HARRAS EDITOR IN CHIEF

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KRZZAT
--OR MAYBE NOT!
BY NOW, HAWKEYE...
--YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT I'M *NOT* AN *EASY* TARGET.
OH, I WOULDN'T SAY THAT.
I SEE YOU'RE SCRAPING THE *BOTTOM* OF THE BARREL *AGAIN*, BARTON.

JEALOUS?
OF YOU?
THAT'LL BE THE DAY...
I'M NOT QUITE DONE PLAYING WITH YOUR EX-BOYFRIEND YET, ROMANOVA--
--BUT I'LL LET YOU HAVE HIM BACK--
--FOR NOW...
WENCH.
YOU NEVER CEASE TO AMAZE ME, CLINT.
STILL CHASING THE BAD GIRLS, huh?
ZARK!
WAITAMINUTE --IS THIS EVEN POSSIBLE?!
THE BEAUTIFUL BLACK WIDOW--
--REALLY IS--
--JEALOUS OF ANOTHER WOMAN?!?
THWIP
SHAZASH!
OH, PLEASE...

KIII-YAAA!
KRAK!
UHHNF!
MAAAN--
--SOMETHING MUST HAVE REALLY GOTTEN ALL YOUR KNOTS IN A BUNCH--
--FOR YOU TO TAKE IT SO "EASY" ON ME, 'TASHA.
FUNNY, BARTON...
NO, SERIOUSLY-- WHAT'S WRONG?
THIS IS WHAT'S WRONG...
THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOX WERE ONCE A HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED TRACKING DEVICE.
ITS DEGREE OF PRECISION WAS SO ACCURATE--
--WE COULD KEEP TABS ON EVEN THE SMALLEST FLEA ANYWHERE INSIDE THE MANSION!
WE'VE GOT PESTS?! I'M BREAKING MY LEASE!
BARTON...
SORRY.
NOW... IT'S JUST A PILE OF TRASH.

AND I THINK WE HAVE YOUR "FRIEND"--MASQUE--TO THANK FOR IT...
WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?
THE RESIDUAL TRACES OF A TASER BLAST--
--IDENTICAL TO MASQUE'S--
--COUPLED WITH THE FACT THAT SHE JUST SO HAPPENS TO BE ONE OF IRON MAN'S OLDEST NEMESES...
RIIIIGHT--
--IRON MAN.
NOW THERE'S A REAL PARAGON OF VIRTUE...
FSSTHUNK!
FORGET THE FACT THAT YOU AND I BOTH THREW DOWN AGAINST OL' SHELL-HEAD BACK IN THE DAY--
--BUT WHAT'S YOUR POINT?
WE CAN ONLY SPECULATE ABOUT THE KINDS OF TECHNOLOGY MASQUE HAS ACCESS TO--
--AND I'M SORRY, BUT AS THE AVENGERS' CHAIRMAN, I JUST CAN'T TRUST HER...
"CAN'T," NATASHA?
OR "WON'T"...?

THE HANGAR BAY...
LET'S TAKE IT FROM THE TOP AGAIN, DEATHCRY.
YOU'RE FIXING YOUR STARSHIP BECAAUUSE ...?
LASER TORCH.
LASER TORCH.
BECAAUUSE, HERCULES...
...FOR THE UMPTEENTH TIME--
--I'M GOING TO THE MOON.
ALONE.
PLASMA COIL INJECTOR.
THE MOON.
BY YOURSELF.
RIIIGHT.
PLASMA COIL INJECTOR.
I HOPE IT'S NOTHING TOO IMPORTANT, BECAUSE I AM NOT LETTING YOU OUT OF MY SIGHT.
IN LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS, WE HAVE TO LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER NOW MORE THAN EVER...*
* WHAT HASN'T HAPPENED TO THE AVENGERS OVER THE PAST FEW ISSUES?!?
A NOBLE SENTIMENT, "MOTHER"...
...BUT YOU SHOULD FIRST START PAYING MORE ATTENTION TO WHAT'S GOING ON--
--RIGHT BENEATH YOUR OWN NOSE!
HEY!!

FOR AS LONG AS THEY'VE FOUGHT SIDE-BY-SIDE AS AVENGERS...
...HERCULES AND DEATHCRY HAVE SHARED A UNIQUE BOND.
WHETHER IT BE FROM FABLED MOUNT OLYMPUS...
...OR THE INTERSTELLAR EXPANSES OF THE SHI'AR IMPERIUM...
...BOTH HAVE BEEN EXILED FROM THE PLACES THEY CALL HOME.
AND AS THEY BEGIN THEIR LIVES ANEW ON EARTH...
...THEY ARE BOTH BEGINNING TO DISCOVER HOW SPECIAL THAT BOND REALLY IS...
DEATHCRY, I--
TELL ME, HERCULES--
--WHAT ARE YOU THINKING RIGHT NOW?
uh, I'M THINKING WE'D-- um--
--BEST GET GOING IF WE'RE-- um--
--GOING TO--um--
--GET GOING!
MEN...
:sigh:

A RATHER TENSE MOMENT BEHIND THEM...
...THESE STAR-CROSSED HEROES PREPARE FOR THEIR JOURNEY INTO THE UNKNOWN.
WHAT I THINK JUST HAPPENED DID NOT JUST HAPPEN...
...DID IT?
I CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT JUST HAPPENED.
I FEEL LIKE SUCH A--
--WHAT'S THE WORD THE TERRANS ALL USE? Ah, YES--
--DORK...
DOCKING CLAMPS--DE-ACTIVATED.
MAGNETIC MOORINGS--RELEASED.
BETTER STRAP YOURSELF IN, BIG GUY--
--'CUZ IN ABOUT 2.2 SECONDS--
--WE'RE GOING LUNAR!
ZOOM!
AND AS THE SPACECRAFT ROARS INTO THE STRATOSPHERE...
...A COUNTDOWN BEGINS...

THE KITCHEN...
I'M NOT GOING TO LOOK AT IT AGAIN...
...
I LOOKED AT IT AGAIN...
YOUR WATCHING WILL NOT MAKE THE POT BOIL ANY FASTER, QUICKSILVER!
VISION!
MUST YOU GET AROUND LIKE THAT?!
IT'S INHUMAN!
YOU ARE JEALOUS.
JEALOUS? OF WHAT?
OF MY ABILITY TO BECOME INTANGIBLE.
IT ALLOWS ME TO TRAVERSE THE MANSION FASTER THAN EVEN YOUR SUPERHUMAN SPEED. BEING A SYNTHEZOID, A GREATER PERCENTAGE OF MY FUNCTIONS FAR SURPASS THOSE OF MOST GENETICALLY-ENHANCED BEINGS.
HUMAN, MUTANT, OR OTHERWISE.
ALLOW ME TO DEMONSTRATE YET AGAIN.
ZAPK!

...
YOUR PROGRAMMING ALSO ALLOWS YOU TO SNEAK AROUND THE HOUSE *UNATTENDED*...
YOU DO NOT *USUALLY* COOK AT SUCH A LATE HOUR. THIS BEHAVIOR IS *IRREGULAR*.
MY *SISTER* AND *THOR* WILL BE RETURNING FROM UPSTATE NEW YORK SOON...
THEY HAVE TAKEN THE *SWORDSMAN* AND *MOONRAKER* TO TONY STARK'S *FORMER* RUSTIC RETREAT.
THIS DATA HAS JUST BEEN DOWNLOADED FROM THEIR SHIP'S LOGS INTO THE MANSION'S CPU.
...
I AM MAKING MY SISTER'S FAVORITE *MEAL*, LIKE I USED TO WHEN WE WERE CHILDREN AND I HAD TO WATCH OVER HER.
BEFORE YOU EVER KNEW THAT THE MUTANT *MAGNETO* WAS YOUR FATHER?
...
I WOULD... *LIKE*... YOU TO *JOIN US* WHEN SHE ARRIVES.
BUT I DO NOT EAT.
WHY, YOU INSUFFERABLE--!!
YOU MUST EXCUSE MY *HUSBAND*, VISION--

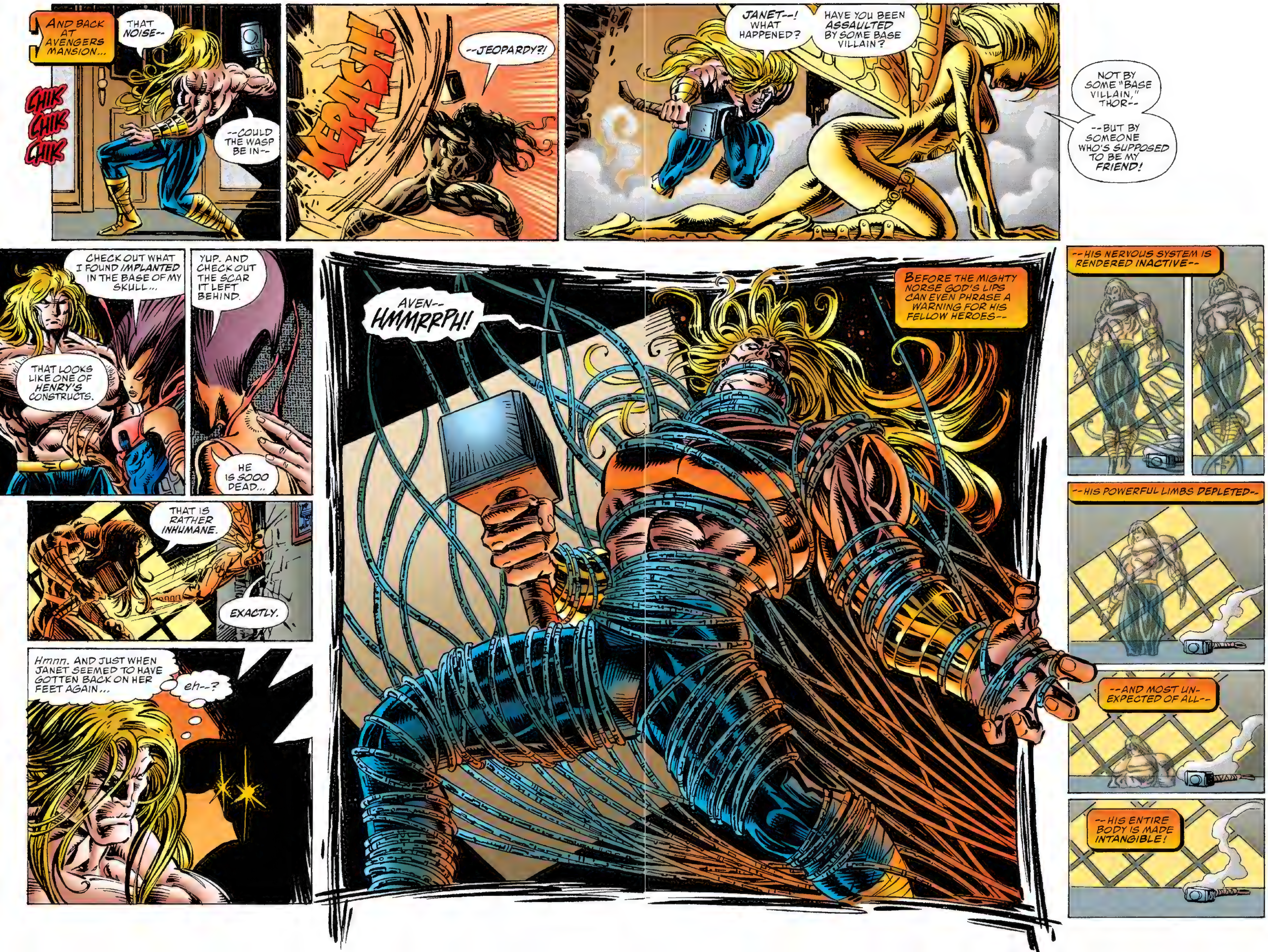
--PIETRO IS MAKING HIS BEST ATTEMPT AT SOMETHING COMPLETELY ALIEN TO HIM--
--COMMON COURTESY.
IT WAS YOUR TURN TO PUT YOUR DAUGHTER TO SLEEP TONIGHT, Y'KNOW.
I'M SORRY, CRYSTAL.
I KNOW HOW DIFFICULT IT IS GETTING LUNA TO FALL ASLEEP WHEN SHE DOESN'T WANT TO.
YOU'RE OFF THE HOOK THIS TIME, MISTER.
NEXT TIME, SHE MIGHT NOT FALL ASLEEP TELLING ME STORIES ABOUT TUC--!
WANDA AND I WERE LIKE THIS ONCE...
...DURING THE ALL-TOO-BRIEF PERIOD AFTER OUR OWN ILL-FATED CHILDREN WERE BORN...
TUC?!
I THOUGHT WE AGREED HE WAS A TOPIC BEST LEFT FORGOTTEN!
LUNA BROUGHT HIM UP, NOT ME.
SHE CARES FOR HIM VERY DEEPLY.
AS IF HE'S HER OWN--
HER WHAT?! HER BROTHER?!?
WE'VE BEEN OVER THIS AND OVER THIS!
THAT IS A CHILD'S FANTASY--NOT REALITY--
--AND I REFUSE TO DISCUSS IT ANY FURTHER!

...
AND WE'RE AT IT *AGAIN.*
FIRST THERE WAS *DANE--*
--AND NOW IT'S *TUC.*
MAYBE I'M OVERREACTING--
--BUT WHY DO I FEEL LIKE EVERY TIME PIETRO AND I MANAGE TO PATCH THINGS UP--
--SOMETHING ALWAYS THREATENS TO TEAR US *APART* ALL OVER AGAIN?
GUESS THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS TO BE MARRIED TO THE *STUBBORNEST* MAN ALIVE--
uhnnhh...
SHUNK!
SUK SUK SUK
SSSSSSSSSS

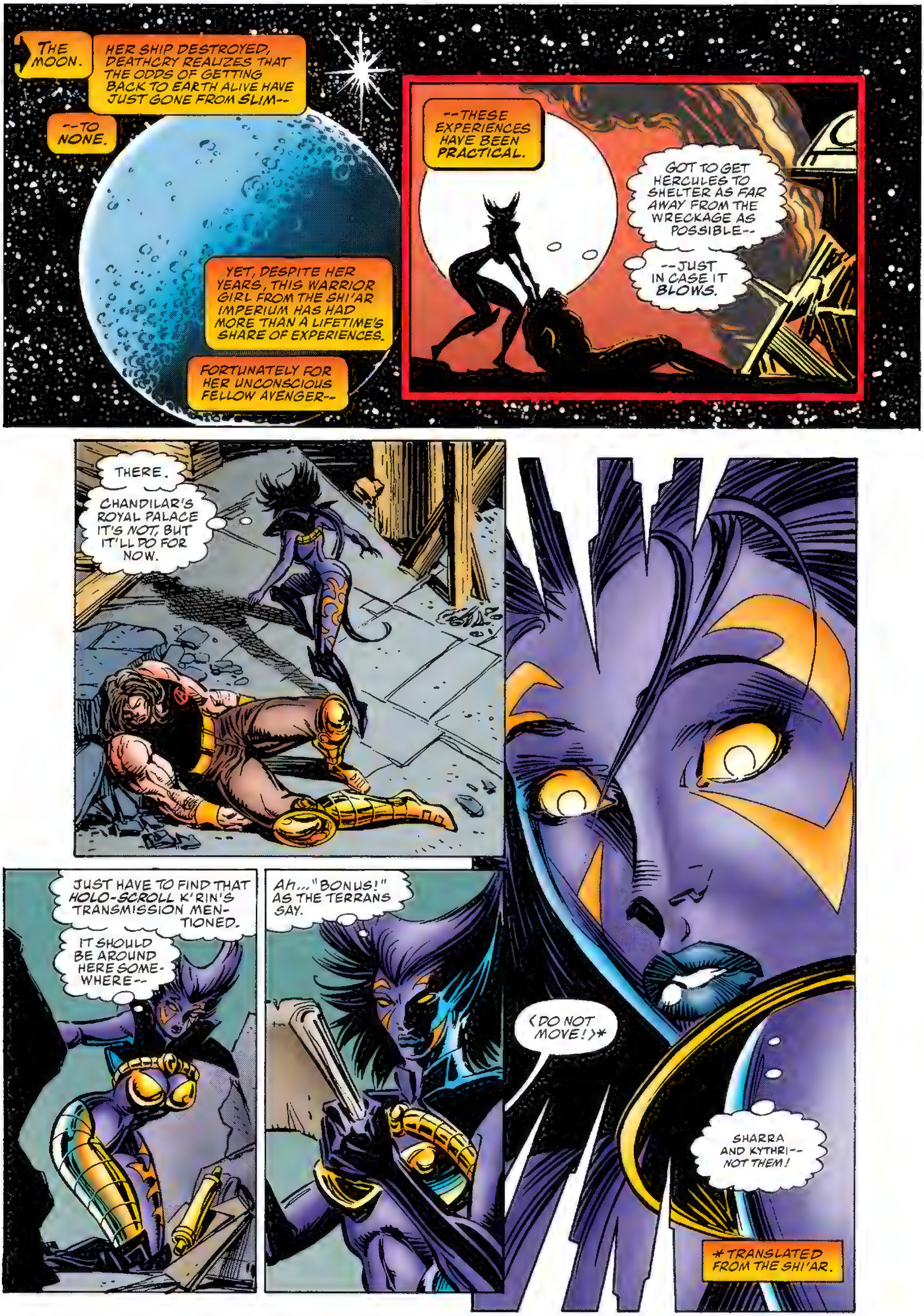
MEANWHILE, AT THE HANGAR BAY...
WANDA! WELCOME HOME, SISTER! YOU TOO, THOR.
IT'S GOOD TO BE HOME, PIETRO.
AND IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU, QUICKSILVER.
HAVE THINGS CALMED DOWN SINCE ANTHONY'S PASSING?
WELL, EXCEPT FOR THE WIDOW'S PARANOID INSISTENCE THAT WE ALL GO ABOUT THE MANSION WITH A "CHAPERONE"--
--EVERYTHING'S BEEN MEZZA MEZZA.
BUT THEY'RE MUCH BETTER NOW THAT MY BABY SISTER IS HERE!
BETTER WATCH WHO YOU CALL A "BABY"--
--OR YOU'RE LIKELY TO END UP ON THE WRONG SIDE OF ONE OF MY HEXES, BIG BROTHER!
THEY ARE SO HAPPY TO SEE ONE ANOTHER.
SUCH WAS THE GREETING I ONCE RECEIVED FROM MY OWN FAMILY.
ANYWAY...
...PERHAPS I SHOULD SEE HOW YOUNG JANET IS ADJUSTING TO HER RECENT METAMORPHOSIS.
I'VE TAKEN THE LIBERTY OF PUTTING SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE CHOLENT ON FOR YOU.
JUST LIKE IN THE OLD COUNTRY, huh?
WE'D BETTER ORDER IN.
VERY FUNNY.
DON'T KILL ME... BUT I INVITED THE VISION TO JOIN US.
OH... REALLY?
BUT THE VISION DOESN'T EAT.
...

JUST BEYOND THE BOUNDARY OF EARTH'S ORBIT...
I HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING.
WE'VE CLEARED THE PLANET, ALL SYSTEMS ARE FUNCTIONING NORMALLY--
--DOESN'T IT LOOK LIKE I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING?
I TOTALLY CRACKED THE DAMAGED ENCRYPTION ON THE HOLO-DISK K'RIN RISKED HER LIFE TO SEND ME-- *
--AND HAVE CONFIRMED THE EXACT LOCATION OF THE CRASHED PROBE:
THE FABLED BLUE AREA OF THE MOON!
THE FORMER HOME OF CRYSTAL'S COUSINS--THE INHUMANS?
WHY WOULD YOUR NURSEMAID HAVE SENT IT THERE?
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT WE'RE GOING TO FIND OUT.
I'M NO LONGER CERTAIN COMING WITH YOU WAS THE BEST IDEA.
OH, PLEEEASE, YOU BIG LUG--
--WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?
BUT JUST AS THE YOUNG SHI'AR'S SHIP BEGINS ITS DESCENT TOWARDS THE BARREN SURFACE BELOW, SURPRISINGLY ENOUGH...
*BACK IN AVENGERS #389.

...SOMETHING DOES!
SHAKA-BOOM!
AFT-THRUSTERS GONE--
--INERTIAL DAMPENERS COMPLETELY OFF-LINE!
AUXILIARY POWER FAILING--
--ALL HANDS BRACE FOR IMPACT!
TINY THOUGH IT MAY BE--
--DEATHCRY'S CRAFT PLUMMETS TOWARDS THE BLUE AREA'S ANCIENT CITY WITH THE SPEED OF A RUNAWAY COMET--
THOOM!
--AND THE FORCE OF A METEOR!


AND BACK AT AVENGERS MANSION...
THAT NOISE--
CHIK CHIK CHIK
--COULD THE WASP BE IN--
KERASH!
--JEOPARDY?!
JANET--! WHAT HAPPENED?
HAVE YOU BEEN ASSAULTED BY SOME BASE VILLAIN?
NOT BY SOME "BASE VILLAIN," THOR--
--BUT BY SOMEONE WHO'S SUPPOSED TO BE MY FRIEND!
CHECK OUT WHAT I FOUND IMPLANTED IN THE BASE OF MY SKULL...
THAT LOOKS LIKE ONE OF HENRY'S CONSTRUCTS.
YUP. AND CHECK OUT THE SCAR IT LEFT BEHIND.
HE IS SOOO DEAD...
THAT IS RATHER INHUMANE.
EXACTLY.
Hmnn. AND JUST WHEN JANET SEEMED TO HAVE GOTTEN BACK ON HER FEET AGAIN...
eh--?
AVEN-- HMMRRPH!
BEFORE THE MIGHTY NORSE GOD'S LIPS CAN EVEN PHRASE A WARNING FOR HIS FELLOW HEROES--
--HIS NERVOUS SYSTEM IS RENDERED INACTIVE--
--HIS POWERFUL LIMBS DEPLETED--
--AND MOST UNEXPECTED OF ALL--
--HIS ENTIRE BODY IS MADE INTANGIBLE!

DOWNSTAIRS...
THE BOTTOM LINE IS THIS:
SOMEDAY--SOMEWAY--MASQUE IS GOING TO BLINDSIDE YOU, CLINT.
Y'KNOW SOMETHING, 'TASHA--?
THIS WHOLE CONVERSATION'S GIVING ME DEJA VU.
YOU'RE READING ME THE EXACT SAME RIOT ACT EVERYONE ELSE DID WHEN YOU AND I FIRST HOOKED UP WITH EACH OTHER.
"SHE'S A COMMIE SPY, BARTON..."
"SHE'S NOTHING BUT TROUBLE, BARTON..."
NO ONE TRUSTED YOU AT FIRST, EITHER.
REMEMBER WHO VOUCHED FOR YOU WHEN THE OTHERS HAD THEIR DOUBTS? I DID.
WELL, I'M DOING IT NOW-- FOR MASQUE.
YOU OUGHTA TAKE THAT INTO CONSIDERATION BEFORE PASSING JUDGMENT, MADAM--
--uh--
--CHAIRMAN.
THAT WAS THOR--
--WASN'T IT?
NOW DO YOU SEE?
FOR ALL WE KNOW, MASQUE'S THE ONE WHO DID THAT TO HIM.
I'M SORRY, HAWK--
--BUT THIS ENDS NOW!


THE MOON.
HER SHIP DESTROYED, DEATHCRY REALIZES THAT THE ODDS OF GETTING BACK TO EARTH ALIVE HAVE JUST GONE FROM SLIM--
--TO NONE.
YET, DESPITE HER YEARS, THIS WARRIOR GIRL FROM THE SHI'AR IMPERIUM HAS HAD MORE THAN A LIFETIME'S SHARE OF EXPERIENCES.
FORTUNATELY FOR HER UNCONSCIOUS FELLOW AVENGER--
--THESE EXPERIENCES HAVE BEEN PRACTICAL.
GOT TO GET HERCULES TO SHELTER AS FAR AWAY FROM THE WRECKAGE AS POSSIBLE--
--JUST IN CASE IT BLOWS.
THERE.
CHANDILAR'S ROYAL PALACE IT'S NOT, BUT IT'LL DO FOR NOW.
JUST HAVE TO FIND THAT HOLO-SCROLL K'RIN'S TRANSMISSION MENTIONED.
IT SHOULD BE AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE--
AH... "BONUS!" AS THE TERRANS SAY.
‹DO NOT MOVE!›*
SHARRA AND KYTHRI-- NOT THEM!
*TRANSLATED FROM THE SHI'AR.

‹YOU MAY BE AWFULLY FAR FROM HOME, EXILE--
‹--BUT THERE IS NOT A SOLITARY PLACE IN THIS GALAXY THAT IS BENEATH THE NOTICE OF THE SHI'AR IMPERIUM!
‹YOU AND YOUR COMPANION ARE PRISONERS OF EMPRESS LILANDRA NERAMANI--
‹--AND IT IS AT HER ROYAL BEHEST THAT WE BRING YOU THIS WARNING...›
‹K'RIN'S ATTEMPTS TO CONTACT YOU HAVE ALL BEEN FOR NAUGHT, CHILD.›
MAJESTRIX!
‹SHE HAS BEEN REMANDED TO THE PRISON COLONY ON ALSIBAR, AND THERE SHE WILL LIVE OUT THE FEW DAYS REMAINING TO HER.
‹BREACH THE STARGATE AND TRY TO EXTRICATE HER--AND YOU WILL BEG ME FOR A SENTENCE AS LENIENT AS HERS.›
‹ALLAY ALL HOPES OF EVER SEEING YOUR TRAITOROUS "NANNY" AGAIN, GIRL.
‹HER FATE IS SEALED--
‹--AND NOW THAT WE POSSESS THE SACRED SCROLL--
‹--SO IS YOURS...›
KRAK!

EARTH.
YOU'RE *NERVOUS*, AREN'T YOU?
OF COURSE I'M *NERVOUS*.
I ALWAYS GET NERVOUS AROUND HIM.
WANDA, I KNOW IT'S DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO SEE HIM--
--BUT THAT'S WHY I ARRANGED THIS LITTLE MEAL IN THE FIRST PLACE.
I JUST WANTED TO SHOW YOU--
--*BOTH* OF YOU--
--THAT I'LL BE THERE IF YOU NEED ME.
Ah! THANK YOU FOR FINALLY GRACING US WITH YOUR *PRESENCE*...
WHAT THE--?!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
SLAM!
ZARK!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S COME OVER YOU, VISION--
--BUT ONE *PROBABILITY-ALTERING HEX* SHOULD KEEP YOUR MAINFRAME OCCUPIED!
THE SCARLET WITCH GESTURES, AND A MYRIAD OF IMPROBABILITIES BECOME PLAUSIBLE...
ONLY HOPE I CAN KEEP ONE STEP AHEAD OF HIS C.P.U.--
ZARK!
--ARRGGH!
...EXCEPT FOR THAT ONE!

JUST AS SWIFTLY AS THE SYNTHEZOID'S ASSAULT BEGAN...
...SO IT COMES TO AN ABRUPT CONCLUSION.
THUD!
AND WHILE THIS PARTICULAR BATTLE IS FINISHED...
...THE WAR IS ABOUT TO BEGIN...
NEXT ISSUE: IT'S MASQUE VERSUS THE MYSTERIOUS SILENT ASSASSIN... AND TO THE VICTOR GOES THE AVENGERS!

MARVEL® COMICS
AVENGERS®
JUN. '96
399
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE CA AUTHORITY
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES
AVENGERS®
BEWARE THE BARRAGE OF BENEDICT!™
DEODATO PALMER

AVENGERS MANSION...
DON'T RECOGNIZE TALL, DARK AND SPOOKY--
--BUT WHOEVER HE IS--
--HE JUST K-O'ED THREE VETERAN AVENGERS WITHOUT A HITCH!
I'D BEST KEEP MY DISTANCE-- FOR NOW...!
SURPRISES HAVE EVER BEEN MASQUE'S FORTÉ...
...GUILE; HER STOCK IN TRADE.
THEY HAVE KEPT HER ALIVE FOR SO LONG, IN FACT...
...THAT SHE SOMETIMES FORGETS...
...SHE HASN'T CORNERED THE MARKET ON DUPLICITY...
GOLD-MINTED COIN. CYBERNETIC I/O PORT.
I KNOW THAT HARDWARE...
BENEDICT UNIT ON-LINE
DATA PROCESSING...
VERIFYING UPLINK...
TARGET ACQUIRED:
DESIGNATE:
MASQUE
uh-oh...

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ZARK! ZARK! ZARK!
STUPID STUPID STUPID!
CAN'T LET CURIOSITY GET THE BETTER OF ME.
LAST TIME I SAW THAT TECH--
--SOMEONE I CARED ABOUT DIED.
AND CONSIDERING THE STATUS OF THE VISION, QUICKSILVER, AND THE SCARLET WITCH--
--IF I DON'T BOLT "ASAP"--
--THE AVENGERS'LL BE SCRAWLING "RIP" ACROSS MY FACE PLATE IN THE MORNING!
Stan Lee PRESENTS... THE MIGHTY AVENGERS IN:
TRUST
BEN RAAB & TERRY KAVANAGH - story
BEN RAAB • script
MIKE DEODATO, JR. • pencils
TOM PALMER • inks
BILL OAKLEY • letters
MALIBU • color seps
JOHN KALISZ • colors
MARK GRUENWALD • editor
BOB HARRAS • The Chief
MADE IT! NOW TO JUST--
NO!!
TENTACLE'S GRIP... UNFF!
--LIKE A VICE!
DRAGGING ME-- PULLING ME--
--CLOSER ... CLOSER!

CAN'T BREAK--
SHUNK!
--FREE?!
DIDN'T YOUR MOTHER EVER TEACH YOU TO "KEEP YOUR TENTACLES TO YOURSELF"?
HAWKEYE-- THE AVENGERS' RESIDENT MARKSMAN.
HIS PROFICIENCY WITH PROJECTILE WEAPONRY...
...SPECIFICALLY, THE BOW AND ARROW...
...IS UNPARALLELED.
GUESS SHE NEVER TAUGHT YOU TO SAY "EXCUSE ME" WHEN LEAVING A ROOM, EITHER...
OH, GREAT.
NOW THAT'S TWO I OWE BARTON...

I HEARD MASQUE'S TASER BLASTS--
--WHAT IN THE WORLD JUST HAPPENED ?!?
TELL ME SOMETHING, ROMANOVA...
...DID THE AVENGERS ELECT YOU "CHAIRMAN" BECAUSE OF YOUR EXPERIENCE AS THE NOTORIOUS BLACK WIDOW--
--OR BECAUSE YOU'RE ALWAYS SITTING ON YOUR--
THAT'S IT!!
FIRST--YOU SABOTAGED THE MANSION'S MAINFRAME!
THEN--YOU ATTACKED US! AND NOW--
--YOU'RE GOING TO TELL US WHY YOU'RE REALLY HERE, OR SO HELP ME--
OR WHAT, TOUGH GIRL?
GONNA KILL ME WITH YOUR LITTLE "WIDOW'S BITE"?
OH, I'M SOOO SCARED...
C'MON-- GIVE ME YOUR BEST SHOT--
--IT'S WHAT YOUR PREDECESSOR WOULD HAVE DONE...
ENOUGH!!
CAN'T YOU TWO GIVE IT A REST ALREADY ?!?
MAAAN... CAP AND I WERE NEVER THIS BAD...

SAVE IT, BARTON.
I'M SICK OF BAILING EARTH'S MIGHTIEST ZEROS OUT OF TROUBLE.
YOU'VE GOT PROBLEMS WITH YOUR PEOPLE, WIDOW--?
--DEAL WITH THEM YOURSELF!
I'M GONE!
SO THIS IS HOW THE AVENGERS REPAY A DEBT?
BY DENOUNCING SOMEONE'S GOODWILL GESTURE--
--AS NOTHING MORE THAN A CALCULATED SCAM?
VERRRY DIPLOMATIC, MADAM CHAIRWOMAN.
CLINT, I--
...
IS HAWKEYE TOTALLY BLIND--?

--OR CAN SOMEONE ELSE CORROBORATE HIS ASSESSMENT OF MASQUE'S "GOODWILL"...?
SHE WASN'T EVEN HERE WHEN WANDA AND I WERE ASSAULTED.
AS A MATTER OF FACT--
--IT WAS THE VISION WHO AMBUSHED US!
THAT IS HIGHLY IMPROBABLE.
DESPITE OUR MARITAL ESTRANGEMENT--
--I HAVE NO LOGICAL MOTIVE TO ATTACK EITHER MY EX-WIFE OR HER BROTHER.
THE LAST EVENT CATALOGUED IN MY INTERNAL ROM IS... IS--
--IT IS GONE. THE FILE HAS BEEN PURGED FROM MY MEMORY.
MASQUE HAS EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE WITH COMPLEX ROBOTICS AND ARTIFICIAL LIFEFORMS--
--SHE WOULD KNOW HOW TO EXECUTE A REMOTE DATA DUMP...
AS WOULD HENRY PYM...
FORGET THAT HE HAS THE NECESSARY TECHNICAL EXPERTISE--
--BUT, FOR ALL WE KNOW--
--GIANT-MAN MIGHT STILL BE UNDER KANG'S INFLUENCE!

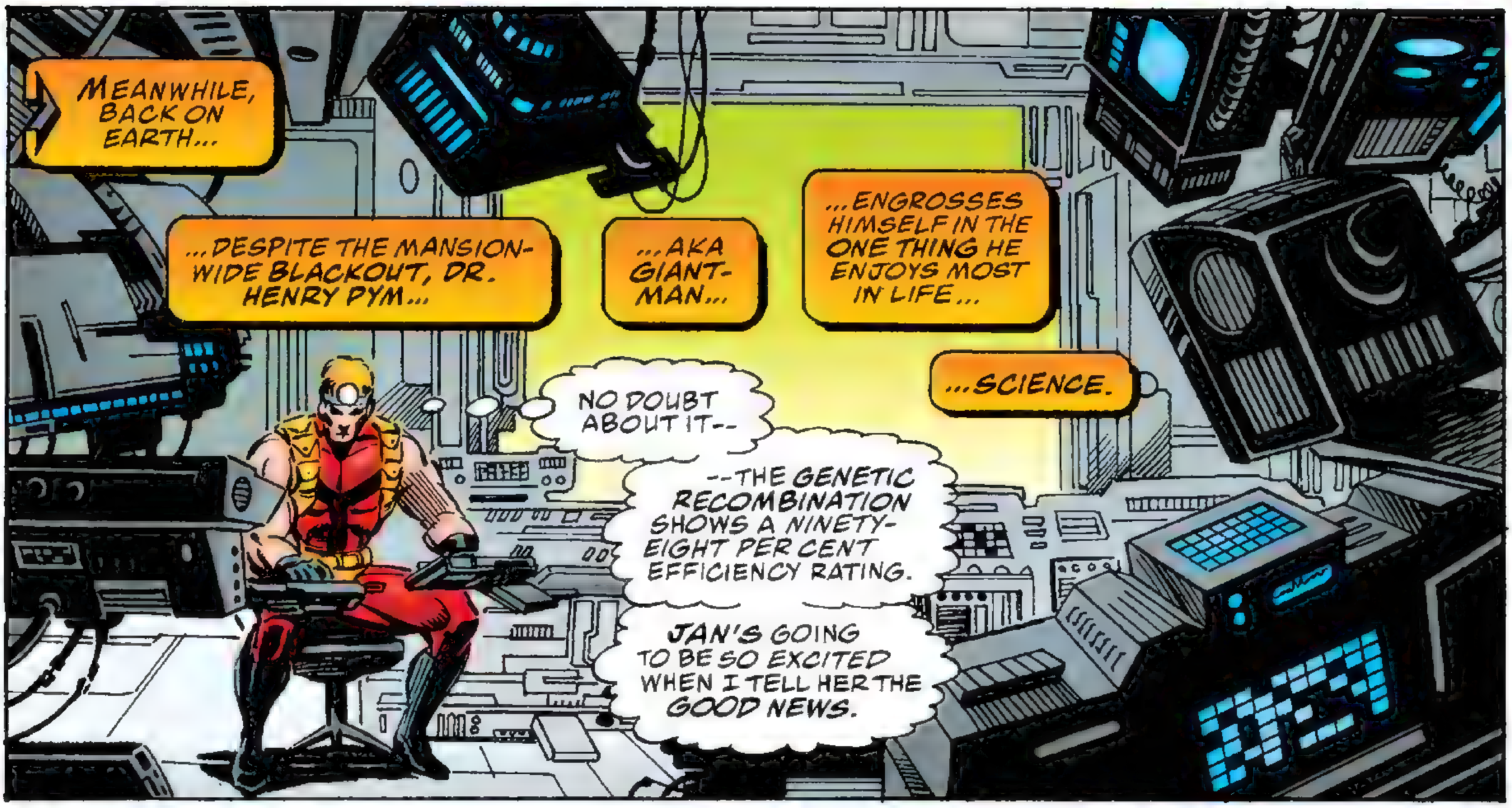
THIS IS ABSURD.
WHAT IF I'M THE GUILTY PARTY?
AFTER ALL, MY MUTANT ABILITY ALLOWS ME TO ALTER PROBABILITY--
--SO YOU'RE ALL PROBABLY THINKING "THIS COULD BE SOME ELABORATE SCHEME SHE CONCOCTED..."
THAT IS WHAT YOU'RE THINKING--
--ISN'T IT, PIETRO?
I-- YOU'RE RIGHT, WANDA.
IT IS ABSURD TO POINT ACCUSATORY FINGERS.
THAT BUSINESS WITH IRON MAN IS MAKING US ALL SO PARANOID--*
--WE'RE SLOWLY BECOMING OUR OWN WORST ENEMIES...
* YOU DIDN'T MISS "THE CROSSING" STORYLINE... DID YOU?
CAUTION IS NOT PARANOIA.
AND SINCE THE FACTS STILL POINT TO MASQUE--
--I PREFER TO ERR ON THE SIDE OF CAUTION.
FAN OUT, AVENGERS, I WANT HER FOUND--
--AND I WANT THE TRUTH!

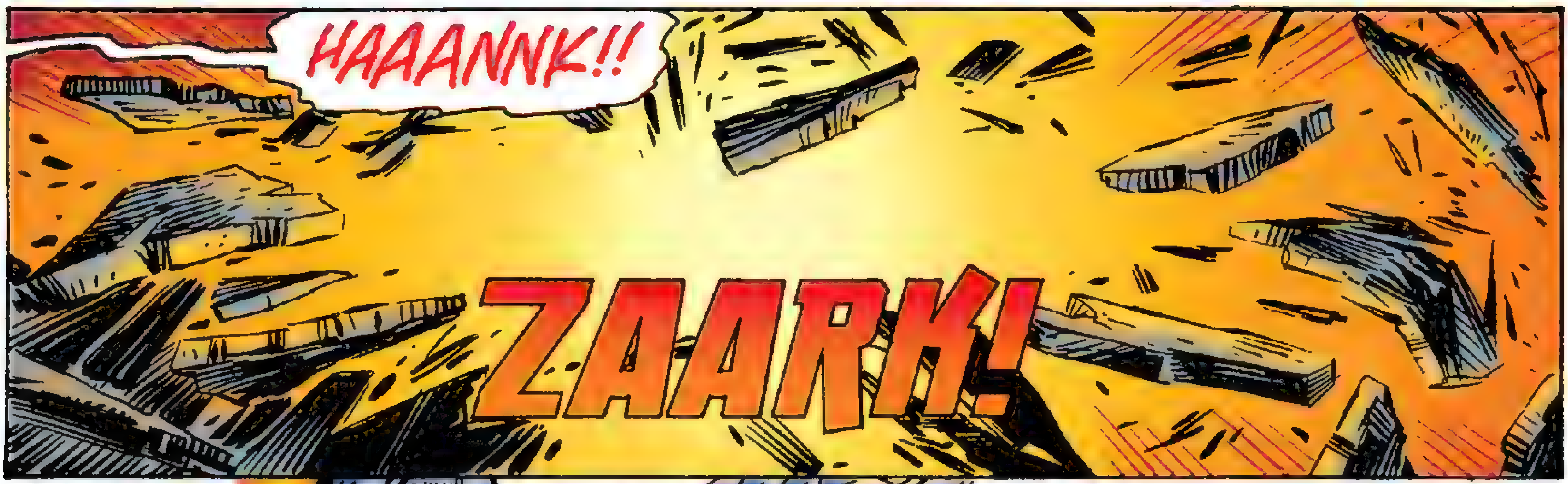
THE BLUE AREA OF THE MOON...
...WHERE THE OLYMPIAN AVENGER--HERCULES--HAS FINALLY REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS ONLY TO DISCOVER A BAD SITUATION...
...HAS GOTTEN SIGNIFICANTLY WORSE!
DEATHCRY!
SHE'S BEEN BEATEN PRETTY SEVERELY--
--BUT BY WHO?!
I REMEMBER THE SHIP EXPLODING--
--AND CRASHING HERE AMONG THESE ANCIENT RUINS--
--BUT THAT'S ABOUT IT.
AND WITH NO SHIP--NO MODE OF COMMUNICATION--
--WE'RE TOTALLY CUT OFF FROM EARTH, THE AVENGERS--
--FROM EVERYONE--eh?
WHO'S THERE?
SHAZAK!
BY ZEUS--!!
SHOW YOURSELF, BASE COWARD!

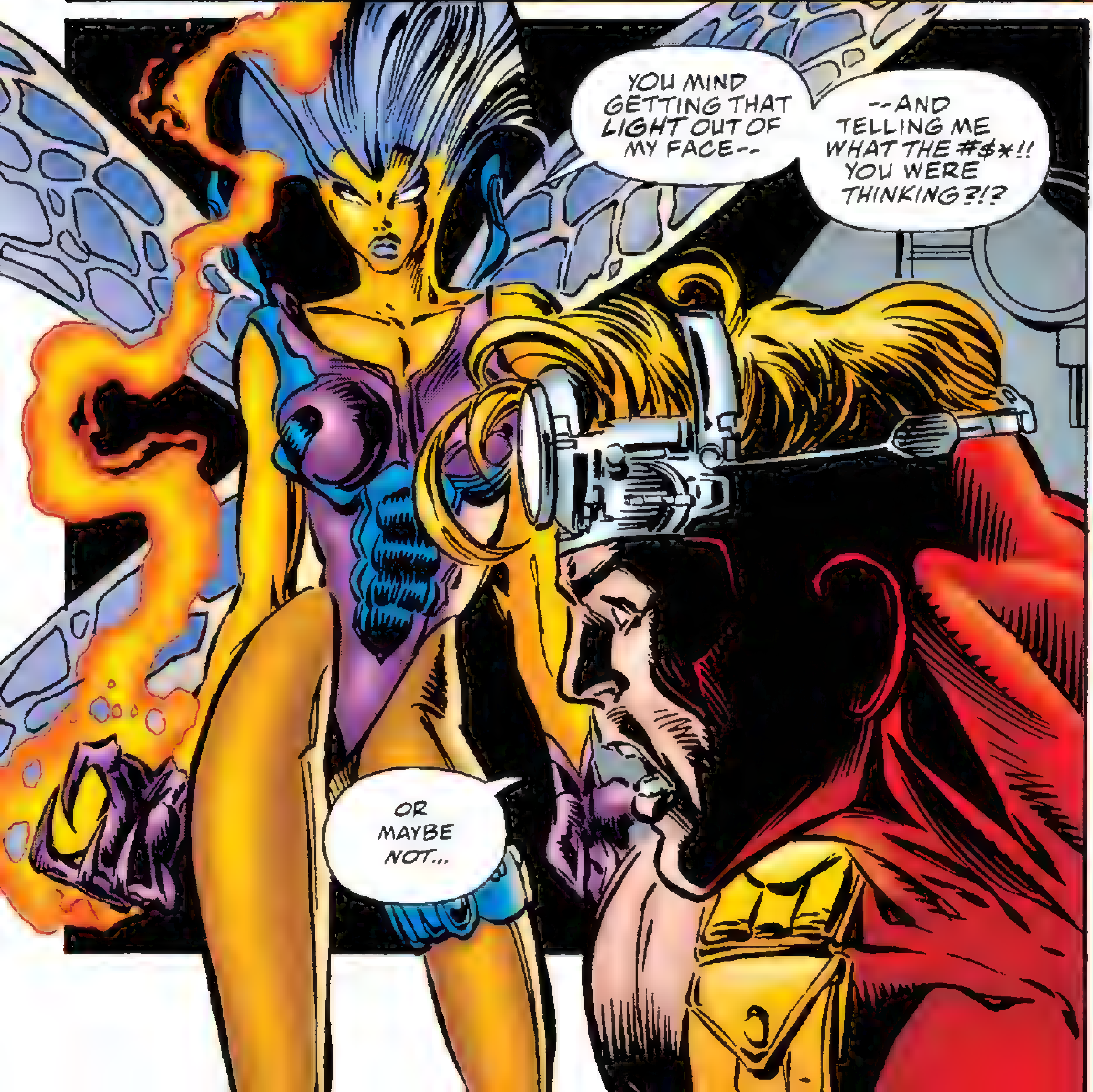
AND WITH A SPEED THAT CLEARLY BELIES HIS ADVANCED YEARS--
--THE SNIPER STANDS REVEALED!
YOU-- YOU'RE SHI'AR?!
IF YOU'RE HUNTING BOUNTY, THEN YOU'D BEST CONTINUE YOUR HUNT ELSEWHERE.
NO REWARD IS WORTH THE AMOUNT YOU'LL SUFFER--
--IF YOU ENDEAVOR TO HARM A SINGLE FEATHER ON THIS GIRL'S HEAD...
BOUNTY HOLDS NO INTEREST TO ME, EARTHER.
I AM SIMPLY HERE TO HELP.
HER TIME IS FLEETING--
WAIT--!

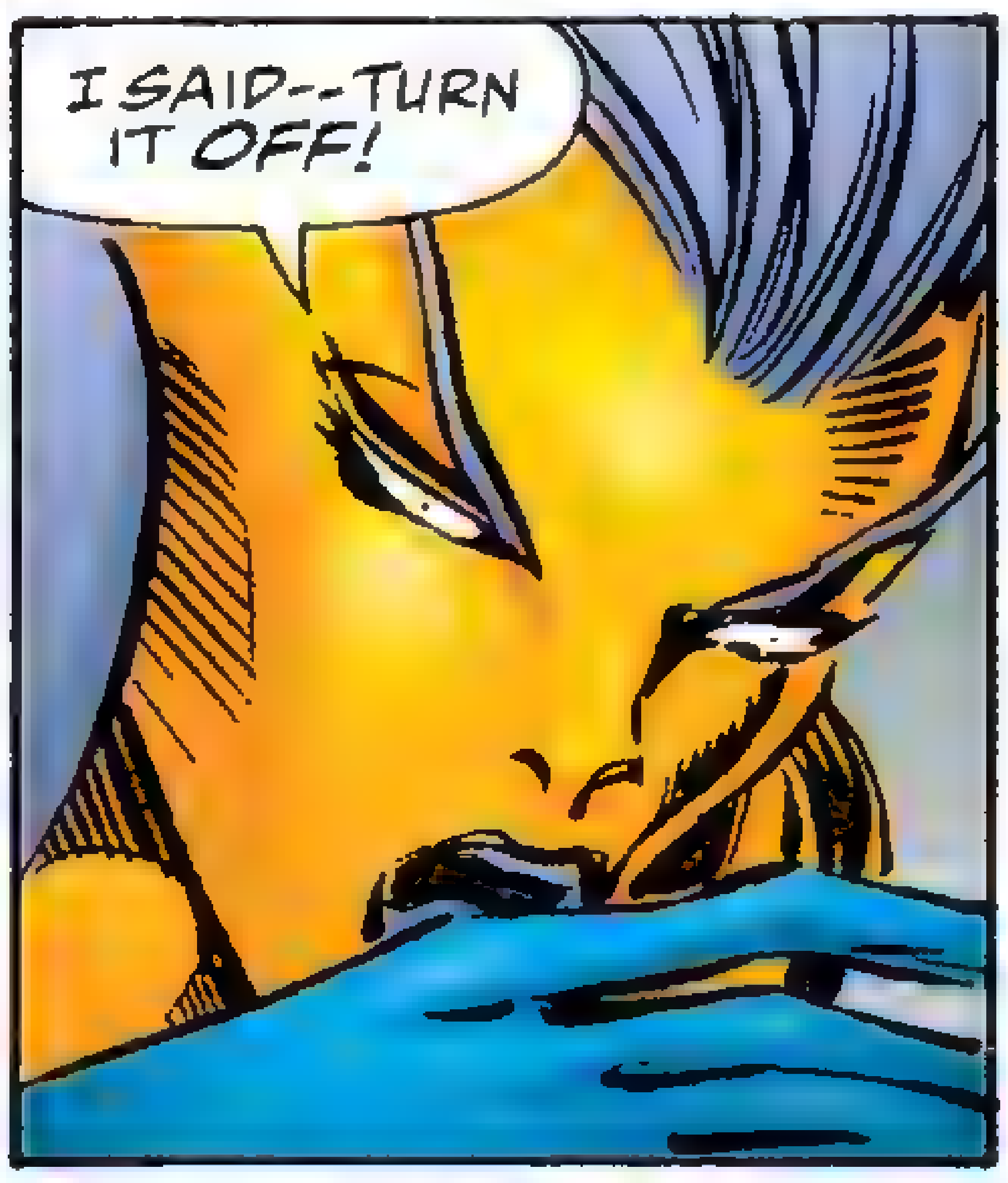
YOU'RE NOT LAYING A FINGER ON HER--
--UNTIL I SAY SO!
I THINK YOU ATTACKED HER-- BEFORE YOU TRIED TO KILL ME--
--SO WHY SHOULD I TRUST YOU?
IF I TRULY WANTED YOU DEAD--
--WE WOULDN'T BE HAVING THIS CONVERSATION...
BESIDES, IF YOU DO NOT TRUST ME-- SHE WILL DIE.
FINE. BUT REST ASSURED THAT IF SHE DOESN'T SURVIVE--
--YOU WILL FOLLOW HER...
A REASONABLE EXCHANGE.
NOW, STEP BACK...
AN ANCIENT SHI'AR MANTRA ON HIS LIPS...
...THE ELDER WARRIOR PERFORMS A RITUAL LONG SINCE ABANDONED BY HIS PEOPLE.
AND AS HIS HANDS PULSE WITH A RADIANCE NOT SEEN IN EONS...

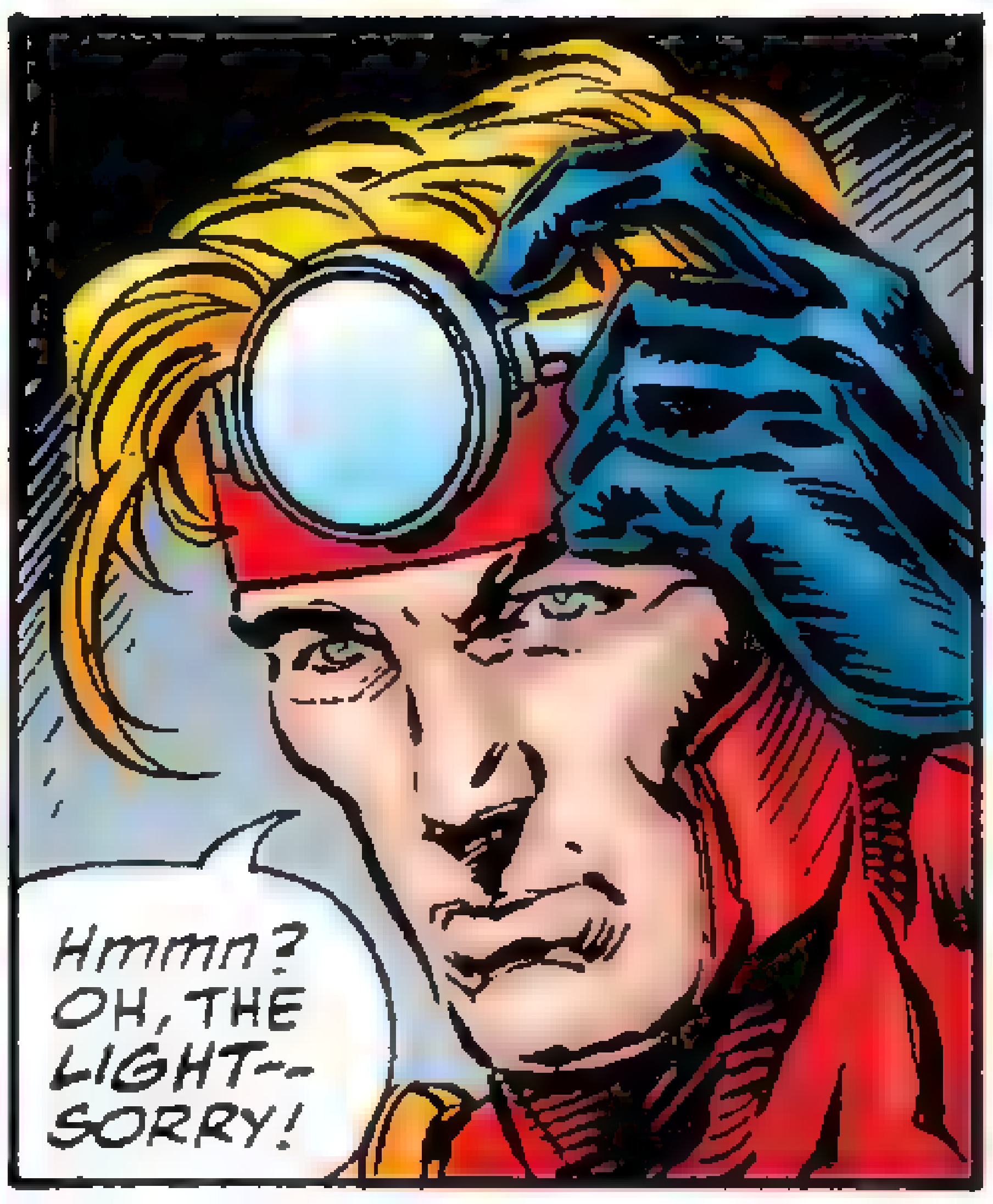
...A MIRACLE HAPPENS.
HEY, HANDSOME--
--YA MISS ME?
AB-SOLUTELY. HOW DO YOU FEEL?
THANKS TO THE BUTT OF THAT SHI'AR WARRIOR'S RIFLE--?
ABOUT AS BAD AS YOU LOOK, BIG GUY!
UH, HERC-- WHO'S THAT?
I CALL MYSELF ZA'KEN-- I'M A FRIEND.
AND IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, GIRL--
--I BELIEVE THIS IS YOURS...
K'RIN'S SCROLL!
YOU STOLE IT FROM THE SOLDIERS?! BUT THEY WERE EMPRESS LILANDRA'S ELITE GUARD!
YES... THEY WERE.
OH. RIGHT.
COME...


MEANWHILE, BACK ON EARTH...
...DESPITE THE MANSION-WIDE BLACKOUT, DR. HENRY PYM...
...AKA GIANT-MAN...
...ENGROSSES HIMSELF IN THE ONE THING HE ENJOYS MOST IN LIFE...
...SCIENCE.
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT--
--THE GENETIC RECOMBINATION SHOWS A NINETY-EIGHT PER CENT EFFICIENCY RATING.
JAN'S GOING TO BE SO EXCITED WHEN I TELL HER THE GOOD NEWS.


HAAANNK!!
ZAARK!


YOU MIND GETTING THAT LIGHT OUT OF MY FACE--
--AND TELLING ME WHAT THE #$*!! YOU WERE THINKING?!?
OR MAYBE NOT...


I SAID--TURN IT OFF!


Hmmm? OH, THE LIGHT--SORRY!

I MAY HAVE VOLUNTEERED TO BE YOUR "GUINEA PIG" BEFORE--
--BUT YOU HAD ABSOLUTELY NO RIGHT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ME!
JAN, HON--
--THE METAMORPHOSIS WAS ONLY SUPPOSED TO BE A FAIL-SAFE!
WITHOUT IT, YOU WOULD HAVE DIED--!
I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT THE METAMORPHOSIS, "MR. FAIL-SAFE"--
--I'M TALKING ABOUT THIS!
A "TOKEN OF AFFECTION" TO KEEP ME AROUND, BIG BOY?
JEALOUS THAT I MIGHT START FAWNING OVER THOR AGAIN?

WELL, HERE'S THE LATEST NEWS FLASH ON WORLD-FAMOUS SOCIALITE JANET VAN DYNE:
THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON KEEPING TABS ON THIS DIVA'S LIFE FROM NOW ON--
--AND THAT'S YOURS TRULY!
SHA-ZARK
NOT THE ACCOUNTANTS-- NOT THE LAWYERS--
--AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY--
--NOT YOU!
...
DON'T STRAIN YOUR ARM PATTING YOURSELF ON THE BACK FOR THAT ONE, HANK.
I KNOW I COMPLETELY BETRAYED JAN'S TRUST BY IMPLANTING THAT SUBCUTANEOUS TRANSCEIVER, BUT--
RRUMMBLLE!
--huh?
IS IT ME, OR IS THE GROUND SHAKING?

KRA TAB OOM!
THOSE ARE SOME AWFULLY FAMILIAR HANDS.
AND IF THEY BELONG TO THE PERSON I THINK THEY DO--
--THEN IT'S TIME FOR GIANT-MAN TO HELP WITH THE EXCAVATION!
HEY THERE, CRYSTAL--THOR--
--NICE TO SEE YOU BOTH TAKING AN ACTIVE INTEREST IN SPELUNKING!
A BIT UNORTHODOX OF A HOBBY-- BUT VERY EDUCATIONAL!
IT WASN'T EXACTLY A WILLFUL VENTURE, HANK!
SOMEONE RENDERED US BOTH INTANGIBLE--
--AND LEFT US FOR DEAD IN THE CAVES BELOW THE MANSION!
"CAVES?" WHAT "CAVES?"

THE MOON...
EARTHRISE...
...IT ALMOST REMINDS ME OF GLORIOUS CHANDILAR...
WERE YOU RAISED ON THE IMPERIAL HOMEWORLD, ZA'KEN?
INITIALLY, DEATHCRY? YES.
BUT AFTER MY PARENTS WERE BRUTALLY MURDERED--
--TO SATISFY SOME DEMAGOGUE'S POLITICAL AGENDA--
--I SUDDENLY FOUND MYSELF EXILED FROM SHI'AR--
--WITH THE HIGHEST BOUNTY IN ALL THE IMPERIUM WEIGHING HEAVILY OVER MY HEAD...
DON'T I KNOW HOW THAT FEELS...
I SUSPECTED AS MUCH, CHILD.
BUT WHAT IF I TOLD YOU I COULD CHANGE THAT--FOR BOTH OF US?
WHAT IF I COULD TAKE YOU HOME?

HOME--?!?
TO CHANDILAR--?!?
OH, HERCULES--
--IT WOULD BE A DREAM COME TRUE!
ARE--ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS, DC?
YOU MIGHT NOT ALWAYS BE ABLE TO STAY ONE STEP AHEAD OF LILANDRA ALL THE TIME, Y'KNOW...
LET ME PUT IT TO YOU THIS WAY, HERC...
YOU'VE JUST FOUND THE KEY THAT UNLOCKS THE GATES OF MOUNT OLYMPUS:
YOU CAN EITHER LEAVE IT SITTING ON THE GROUND--
--REMAINING ALONE FOREVER...
OR, YOU CAN LET THE GATES SWING WIDE OPEN AND RETURN TO THE LIFE YOU ONCE HAD...
WHAT WOULD YOU DO?
SO, TELL ME--
--WHAT'S CHANDILAR LIKE THIS TIME OF YEAR...?
A BEGINNING...

BACK AT AVENGERS MANSION...
...THE BLACK WIDOW'S HUNT FOR THE TRUTH...
...PEELS AWAY ONE LAYER OF MYSTERY...
GIANT-MAN'S LAB-- DESTROYED?!
HANK'S SO FASTIDIOUS ABOUT HIS WORK--
--HE WOULD NEVER LET ANYTHING GET THIS OUT OF CONTROL.
NOPE--THOSE TASER MARKS, THE PRECISION OF THE BLAST POINTS--
...ONLY TO DISCOVER ANOTHER LAYER HIDDEN BENEATH!
--THIS HAS MASQUE WRITTEN ALL OVER IT!
YOU CAN TAKE THE "THIS HAS MASQUE WRITTEN ALL OVER IT" LOOK OFF YOUR FACE--
--THIS ISN'T MY HANDIWORK.
OH, AND YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE THAT?
Y'KNOW, I USED TO BE A LOT LIKE YOU.
I'M NOT PROUD OF IT, BUT THE ONE THING MY "SORDID" PAST DID FOR ME--
--WAS TEACH ME HOW TO SEE BOTH SIDES OF THE FENCE. AND BECAUSE OF THAT--
--I KNOW HOW FAR YOU'RE WILLING TO GO--
--TO WATCH OUT FOR YOUR OWN BACK--
FWSSSS
FWSS
FWSSSS

ROMANOVA--
--YOU HAVE NO CLUE WHAT I'M CAPABLE OF--
--NOW GET DOWN!
HEY--!!
ARRG!
THWIP!
WHIIIP!
THWIIP!
YOU OWE ME BIG FOR THIS, AVENGER--
--YOU OWE ME!!!
AND AS MASQUE "MELTS" INTO THE SHADOWS...
WHO ARE YOU...?!
WHAT DO YOU WANT...?
...THE TRUE ARCHITECT OF THE NIGHT'S INSANITY FINALLY EMERGES...
TING!
TINK!
A GOLD COIN?

CYBERNETIC CIRCUITRY--?
WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?
A TRADE.
THE WOMAN--
--FOR INFORMATION.
USE IT WISELY...
THIS WARNING SAID, THE CYBORG CALLED BENEDICT...
...SINKS INTO THE SHADOWS WHENCE HE CAME...
...AND IS GONE!
LET'S SEE--
--A CYBORG COURIER...
...A KIDNAPPED VILLAIN...
...AND A GOLD COIN LOADED WITH SECRET INFORMATION...
THIS CERTAINLY ADDS UP TO A PRETTY LITTLE MYSTERY--
--BUT WHAT DOES IT ALL HAVE TO DO WITH ME?

DAWN.
THE TIME WHEN THE AVENGERS' BUTLER, EDWIN JARVIS, BEGINS HIS DAILY ROUTINE.
AND DESPITE THE PREVIOUS NIGHT'S EVENTS...
...THIS DAWN IS NO EXCEPTION.
AT LEAST, NOT YET IT ISN'T...
WHAT A GLORIOUS MORNING.
I'M SO GLAD THINGS HAVE FINALLY CALMED DOWN AROUND THE HOUSE.
WHAT WITH MASTER TONY'S UNFORTUNATE "DEPARTURE" FROM THE FOLD...
...WE CAN ONLY PRAY THAT TOMORROW HOLDS A BRIGHTER DAY FOR US ALL.
DING DONG
FOR IF WE CANNOT TRUST OUR FELLOW AVENGERS...
...THEN WHOM CAN WE TRUST?
OH, MY--
CRASH!
CAPTAIN AMERICA! BUT I HEARD YOU WERE IN EXILE!
I WAS, JARVIS, BUT AMERICA NEEDS ME--SO I'M BACK!
NEXT ISSUE: THE AVENGERS' AWESOME 400TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE, FEATURING THE TALENTS OF MARK WAID AND MIKE WIERINGO!

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AVENGERS
THE ASSEMBLY

Dear Assemblers,
RE:AVENGERS #394.

Outstanding!!! I just recently picked up an issue of AVENGERS and I cannot believe it! Mike Deodato's work is top-notch! The story has me biting my nails off! The story is fascinating!

I really like the costume changes. Hawkeye looks sharp, younger, and ready to roll. Pietro and Wanda had theirs since, like, when dinosaurs roamed the Earth. Black Widow looks sexy and I like the idea of the formation of a spider on her costume. My only disappointment was the Wasp's change. She doesn't look as sweet and sexy as before; she looks like more of a housefly.

The villains have become much more real, with emotions and desires. I always liked the idea of a villainous team, like the former Acolytes. Why not put your brilliant heads together and come up with one?

Also, I hear Thor will be joining the ranks soon. Does that mean the Enchantress is coming along with him now that they are friends? While I'm at it, who are Deathcry and Swordsman? Please inform me about these two; I have no idea who they are. And on one final note, why not give Cap a new costume? I mean, he has had that costume way too long.

Thank you for bringing out the best in Marvel, you did a bang up job!

Aldo Merino
419 Tealmeadow Ct.
Houston, TX 77024

Hey! Thanks, Aldo. Sorry to hear the new Wasp didn't set off any bells for you–give her time, though, and you might find that she's grown on you.

No plans for a new team of villains to face off against our team right now. What, with the new Zodiac out there, not to mention Kang, Mantis and company still on the loose, the Avengers certainly have their hands full, thank you. And there is a major event looming on the horizon...

Avengers Crew,
RE:AVENGERS #394 and AVENGERS: TIMESLIDE.

My compliments on a job well done! The revamping of the AVENGERS and IRON MAN has been great and much needed. *The Crossing* has been a terrific story; until now. The Avengers going back 10 years to get a 19 year-old Tony Stark. How can that be? I thought Tony wore his grey armor in Vietnam? Now you're telling me that Vietnam was 5 or six years ago? I understand time works a little differently in comicland, but get real. I think you guys are getting a little too liberal with your creative license. Maybe if you said 20 years that would make a little more sense. In my opinion, Tony Stark should now be about 35 years old. It just doesn't fit that you could travel to a time before the Fantastic Four and the Avengers, before Spider-Man & Daredevil, and only have to travel 10 year back. Even a certain unnamed clone saga was slightly more acceptable than this.

Other than that, I love the changes being made. You have caused me to return to the true heroes of comics. Keep up the good work, just concentrate a little bit more on your timelines.

Mark Korsu
119 Amboy Avenue
Edison, NJ 08818

"Outstanding!!! I just recently picked up an issue of AVENGERS and I cannot believe it! Mike Deodato's work is top-notch! The story has me biting my nails off! The story is fascinating!"

Yours was not the only letter to make this point, Mark. However, that was an *alternate* reality the Avengers journeyed to. After all, temporal physics preclude the possibility (say *that* ten times fast!) of the Marvel Universe as we know it existing if Tony was brought to the present before he ever became Iron Man. That's more than your run of the mill paradox–it's not possible! Further, Tony's parents died in that reality at the hands of Tobias–something which history did not record in the Marvel universe timeline.

Dear Assemblers,

I've been really enjoying the whole *Crossing/Timeslide* storyline in the AVENGERS family of books. I am looking forward to the upcoming rebirth of Zodiac (who I've missed since they were wiped out in WEST COAST AVENGERS lo, these many years ago). However, there are two things that are bugging me.

First, is this the same Mantis that a few years ago fought beside the Silver Surfer and Fantastic Four to save her son and encountered her Celestial Madonna rival, Moondragon in FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL #25?

Second, during the "Citizen Kang" serial and in the AVENGERS:TERMINATRIX OBJECTIVE limited series, it was shown that Kang is coupled with his one true love, Ravonna (all of the Kang duplicates were wiped out in the battle between Kang's rival, Alioth and Kang's servant, Tempus).

James Clink
1512 South Nearglen Ave.
Glendora, CA 91740

So you're feeling bugged, eh, James? Well we've got the prescription for you–answers!

Indeed, that is the self-same Mantis the Avengers once knew and loved–Kang has that effect on women (when they're not running away from him, that is!).

As for Ravonna...you might recall that Kang was indisposed at the end of that limited series, so it's obvious that events have altered Kang's status qui between then and now!

Dear Assembly,

As I write this letter, I anticipate the upcoming closing chapter of *The Crossing*. I'm a bit of a veteran to these remolding sagas, remembering everything from *Galactic Storm* to Dr. Druid's short-lived leadership of the group. I have a lot of comments regarding the current storyline; while I like the closeness exhibited with all the characters, I'm still a bit uneasy with the idea that Tony Stark has been a "plant" within the Avengers all these years. For now, however, I'm willing to wait and see how things play out.

No matter how the current story turns out, there are obviously going to be a number of changes for all the titles in the AVENGERS family. As a result, I have a number of questions I would like to address (lucky you):

1) I've heard that the big three (Thor, Captain America, and Iron Man) will be rejoining the Avengers. Is this true?

2) Do the new changes/new look for the Wasp mean she can no longer shrink?

3) Is it true that Mark Waid will be taking up the writing duties of AVENGERS?

Thanks for taking the time to listen. Best of luck to the entire crew!

Jeffrey Coburn
2321 Elm St.
Manchester, NH 03104

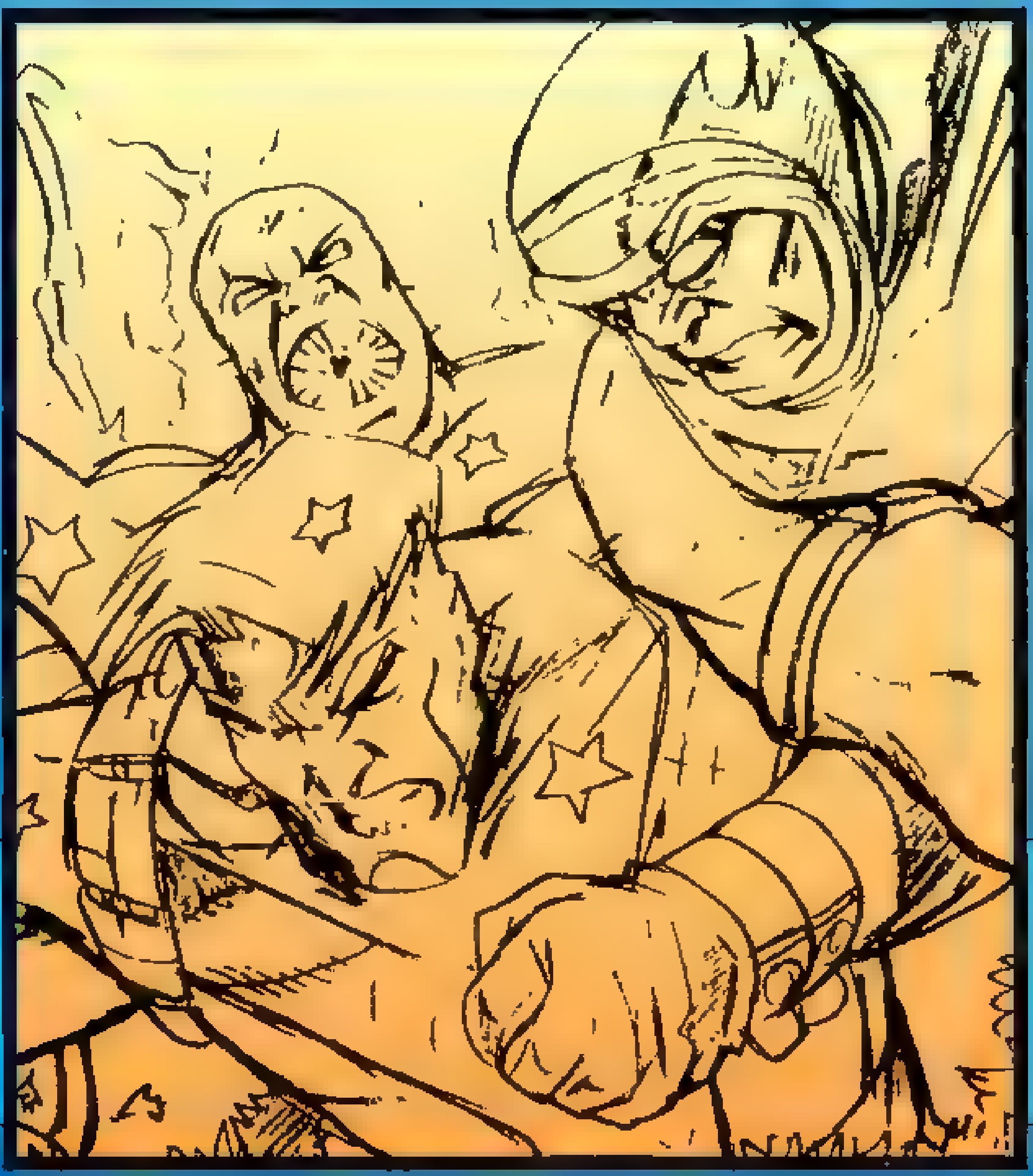
We're thrilled that you found The Crossing so riveting, Jeffrey, so we're going to go ahead and answer your inquiries:

1) Oh, yeah, as of issue #396.

2) Yes, the once-winsome Wasp is now a permanent 4"5".

3) Why, yes, he is, starting with issue #400! We can hardly waid–uh, wait.

NEXT TIME:



Yay! It's new writer Mark Waid along with guest penciler Mike Wieringo and inker Tom Palmer bringing you our gala double-sized 400th issue! The Avengers must face the foes of their past – today!

MARVEL® COMICS
AVENGERS
JUL. '96 400
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES
AVENGERS®
GIANT-SIZE
ANNIVERSARY SPECTACULAR!
DEODATO + PALMER
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES UP AGAINST AN ENDLESS ASSAULT OF OLD ENEMIES!

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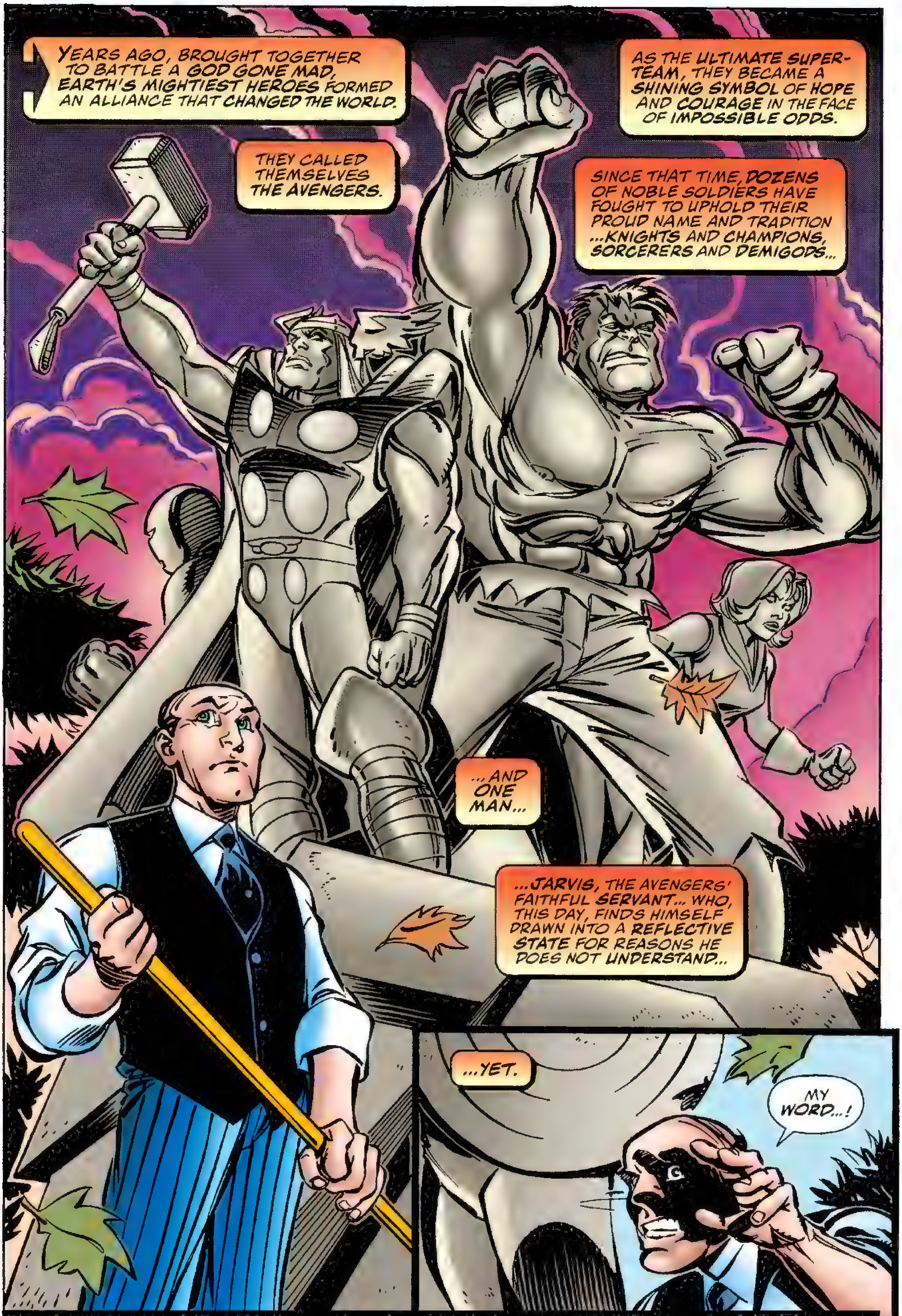
YEARS AGO, BROUGHT TOGETHER TO BATTLE A GOD GONE MAD, EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES FORMED AN ALLIANCE THAT CHANGED THE WORLD.
THEY CALLED THEMSELVES THE AVENGERS.
AS THE ULTIMATE SUPER-TEAM, THEY BECAME A SHINING SYMBOL OF HOPE AND COURAGE IN THE FACE OF IMPOSSIBLE ODDS.
SINCE THAT TIME, DOZENS OF NOBLE SOLDIERS HAVE FOUGHT TO UPHOLD THEIR PROUD NAME AND TRADITION ...KNIGHTS AND CHAMPIONS, SORCERERS AND DEMIGODS...
...AND ONE MAN...
...JARVIS, THE AVENGERS' FAITHFUL SERVANT... WHO, THIS DAY, FINDS HIMSELF DRAWN INTO A REFLECTIVE STATE FOR REASONS HE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND...
...YET.
MY WORD...!

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YOUNG MAN!
YEEARRGH!
FCHOOM!
STAND... BACK! CHRONAL... DISCHARGE... PAINFUL...
CHRONAL...?
WHO ARE YOU?
NAME... IS TYFON.
I'M A... TIMESKIMMER FROM... THE FUTURE.
DID I... DID I MAKE IT?
"MAKE"...?
THE DATE! WHAT IS THE DATE?
IT'S MAY 31ST ...1996!
THEN... THEN THIS IS IT...!
EDWIN JARVIS... YOU HAVE TO LISTEN TO ME! TODAY IS THE DAY THE AVENGERS DIE...
...AND ONLY YOU CAN SAVE THEM!
STAN LEE PRESENTS THE FINAL MILESTONE AVENGERS EVENT:
History Repeats Itself
Mark Waid STORY
Mike Wieringo BREAKDOWNS
Tom Palmer FINISHES
John Kalisz COLORS
Malibu COMPUTER COLOR
Bill Oakley LETTERS
Mark Gruenwald EDITOR
Bob Harras EDITOR IN CHIEF

WAIT! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
IF THIS IS THE GARDEN... THEN WE MUST BE BEHIND...
...YES! AVENGERS MANSION!
TAKE ME INSIDE! I MUST WARN THEM OF WHAT I KNOW!
YOU CAN'T! I MEAN, THEY'RE NOT HERE! THEY'VE TAKEN TO THE STREETS OF MANHATTAN--
"--ON AN URGENT MISSION!"
THAT'S IT! RUN! COWER BEFORE ME!
THE BLACK KNIGHT RULES THE SKIES!
OH?
WE'LL SEE HOW LONG THAT LASTS...

?
EVERYTHING TWISTING... TURNING...?
RISE, MY STEED! FLY US ABOVE THIS MADNESS--
NNCHH!
THWAM!
WELL DONE, MY SISTER! STILL, THE NEXT TIME YOU INDUCE VERTIGO IN A VILLAIN--
--PERHAPS YOU CAN DO SO IN A LESS CROWDED AREA?
I DO WHAT I CAN, PIETRO! THE SPELLS OF THE SCARLET WITCH ARE ALWAYS A LITTLE UNPREDICTABLE!
DOES YOUR WIFE NEED HELP?
APPARENTLY NOT!
QUICK-SILVER? WOW!
"CRYSTAL'S ELEMENTAL POWERS FARE WELL AGAINST THE MELTER!"
HEY-- I'D HEARD YOU WERE DEAD!
NOT AT ALL!
YOU, ON THE OTHER HAND, DEAR GIRL...
...AREN'T LONG FOR THIS WORLD AT ALL.
SSSSSSS

NO LIVING THING CAN RESIST THE WITHERING RAYS OF THE RADIOACTIVE MAN!
INDEED?
NOT EVEN ONE WHO CAN MAKE HIS MOLECULES DENSER THAN LEAD...
THE VISION--!
...WHILE AT THE SAME TIME, SEIZE YOUR HEART WITH AN ETHEREAL HAND?
GHUUH--
YEAH! AVENGERS ARE DA BOMB!
NOO YAWK LOVES YOU, MAN!
NOW THESE ARE HEROES! NOT LIKE THOSE CREEPY... WHADDA-YACALLEM... X-MEN!
THEY'RE OUR KINDA PEOPLE!
LISTEN TO THEM! DO YOU THINK THEY KNOW THEY'RE REFERRING TO BROTHER-AND-SISTER MUTANTS...
...AN INHUMAN...
...AND A SYNTHEZOID?
IT HARDLY MATTERS, WANDA. WE, OF ALL AVENGERS, SHOULD KNOW...
...THAT HUMANITY COMES FROM THE SOUL... NOT THE FLESH.

PIETRO, HELP ME. WE MUST FIND A SUITABLE PLACE TO INCARCERATE THESE...
HMMM. STRANGE...
YOU REMAIN THE MASTER OF UNDERSTATEMENT, VISION.
THEY'RE CHANGING ...REVERTING INTO SOME SORT OF... DARK MATTER.
THEN IF THEY ARE NOT WHO--OR WHAT--THEY SEEM TO BE...
...WHERE DID THESE SHADOW-MATTER BEINGS COME FROM?
ASK EAST 81ST STREET! LOOK!
THAT SAME SHADOW-SUBSTANCE--
--IS ENGULFING THE ENTIRE BLOCK!
"ENGULFING"? TRY "REPLACING"! THOSE BUILDINGS WEREN'T THERE BEFORE!
HAS ANYONE ELSE ENCOUNTERED THIS? CAP-- DO YOU READ ME?
WE'VE GOT VILLAINS CRAWLING OUT OF THE WOODWORK-- BUT THEY'RE NOT WHAT THEY SEEM TO BE!

HOW SO?
THE WAY THE LIVING LASER IS HOLDING US OFF--I'D SAY HE'S AS POWERFUL AS EVER!
STAY BACK, IRON MAN! YOUR ARMOR MAY PROTECT YOU FROM MY HEAT BEAMS--
--BUT THESE PEOPLE HAVEN'T YOUR ADVANTAGE!
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE ME CUT THROUGH THEM?
I'D RATHER SEE YOU CUT THE CHATTER.
AARGH!
FWOK!
WHAT THE--?
HEY, WINGHEAD! CHECK THIS!
ONE KICK FROM OL' HAWKEYE--AND LASER GOES ALL TO PIECES?
KSSH!
SHADOW MATTER! WANDA SAYS HER TEAM FOUGHT SHADOW DUPLICATES, TOO!
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

"THE END OF THE WORLD.
"LET ME EXPLAIN. ACCORDING TO OUR RECORDS, THIS DAY SAW THE DAWN OF A MONSTROUS DARKNESS THAT WILL PLAGUE ALL FUTURE GENERATIONS."
ON THIS DAY, THE AVENGERS' GREATEST FOE REAPPEARED--
--AND OPENED A VAST DIMENSIONAL PORTAL LINKING THIS REALITY TO A DARK DIMENSION.
DESPITE THE AVENGERS' BEST EFFORTS, ITS BLACK FORCES OVERWHELMED EARTH--
--AND PLUNGED YOUR WORLD INTO A NEW DARK AGE WHICH CONTINUES INTO MY OWN TIME... AND BEYOND.
THEIR GREATEST FOE ...WHO?
WE HAVE NO RECORD OF THAT...
...BUT YOU DO.
ME?
YOU. YOU'RE THE WITNESS.
HERE. TAKE THIS.
WITNESS?
OUR INFORMATION INDICATES YOU'VE SERVED THE AVENGERS SINCE THEY BEGAN. WHETHER YOU REALIZE IT OR NOT, JARVIS, YOU ALONE HAVE RECORDED ALL THEIR HISTORY...

...AND WITH THE HELP OF MY TECHNOLOGY...
...I CAN READ IT DIRECTLY FROM YOUR MEMORIES!
WHOEVER THIS MYSTERIOUS ENEMY IS, HE'S SOMEHOW USING THE AVENGERS' OWN PAST AGAINST THEM. OLD FOES... FORGOTTEN THREATS... ARE MANIFESTING ALL OVER THE CITY!
REMEMBER EVERYTHING YOU CAN ABOUT THE AVENGERS, JARVIS. OPEN YOUR MIND. ONLY THERE CAN WE FIND A CLUE AS TO WHO'S BEHIND THIS!
ONLY BY KNOWING YOUR HISTORY HAVE WE ANY HOPE... OF CHANGING MINE!
I... SHOULD I START AT THE BEGINNING?
NO. GO FARTHER IN, WHERE MY RECORDS ARE CLOUDIER.
IN THE MEANTIME, I'LL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE TEAM.
WHAT OF THE OTHERS? AM I MISTAKEN--OR ISN'T ONE OF THE AVENGERS THE NORSE GOD--

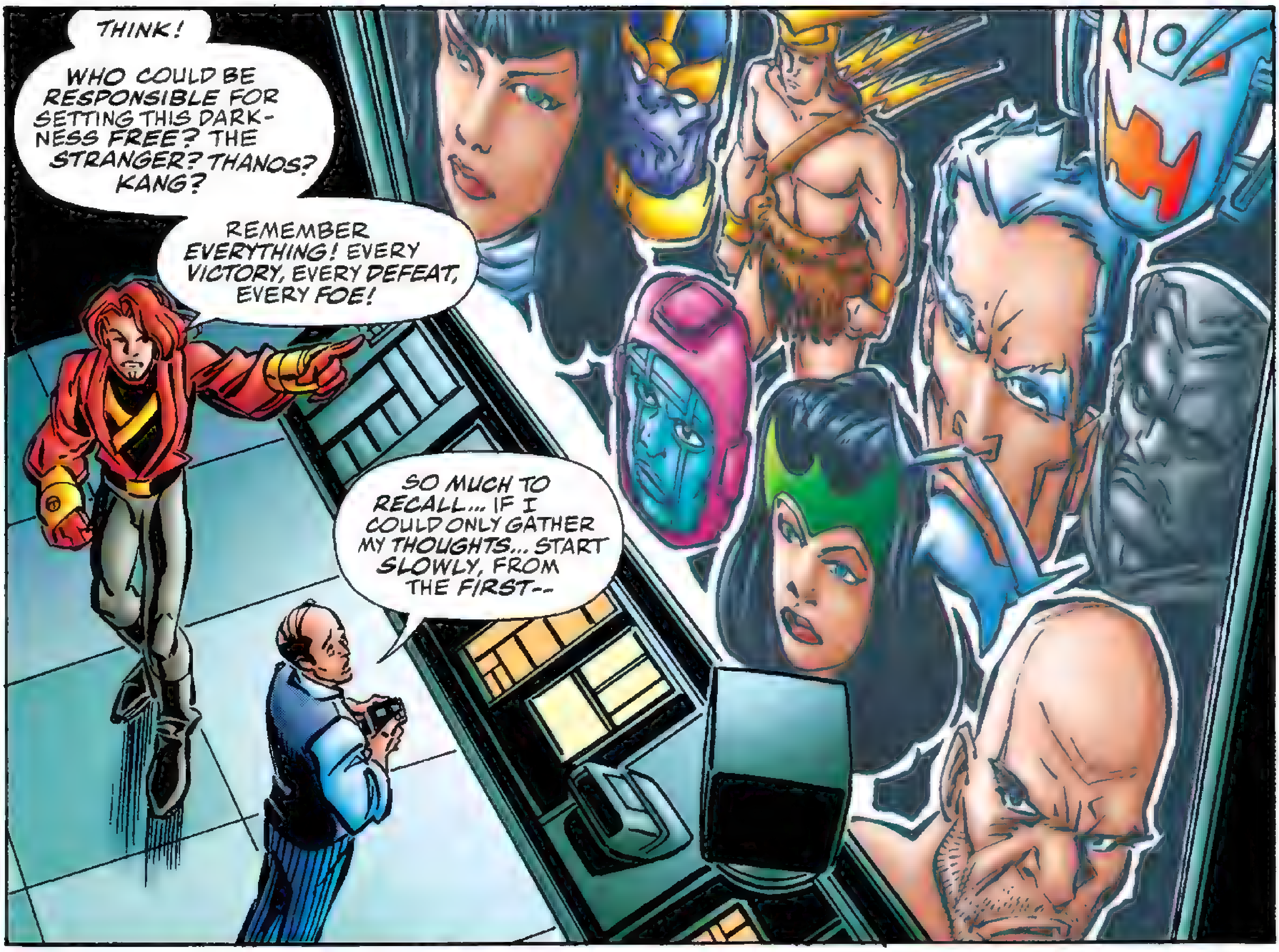
THOR! LOOK SHARP!
THIS IS INSANE! WIDOW, I KNOW YOU'RE NOT TERRIBLY FAMILIAR WITH THE KREE AND THE SKRULLS, BUT BELIEVE ME--
--THEY DON'T NORMALLY SHOOT IT OUT IN FRONT OF THE GUGGENHEIM!
HOW ABOUT A LITTLE CROWD CONTROL?
DONE!
WASP! I CAN TAKE OUT SOME SKRULLS--
KREE.
--KREE WITH MY WIDOW'S BITE! DOES YOUR STING HAVE ANY EFFECT?
SURE! IT'S TURNING "SKRULLS"--AND "KREE" --INTO SHADOW BLOBS!
WHAT ARE WE REALLY FIGHTING HERE? WHO ARE THESE GUYS?
We are MANY and ONE, Giant-Man.
huh?!

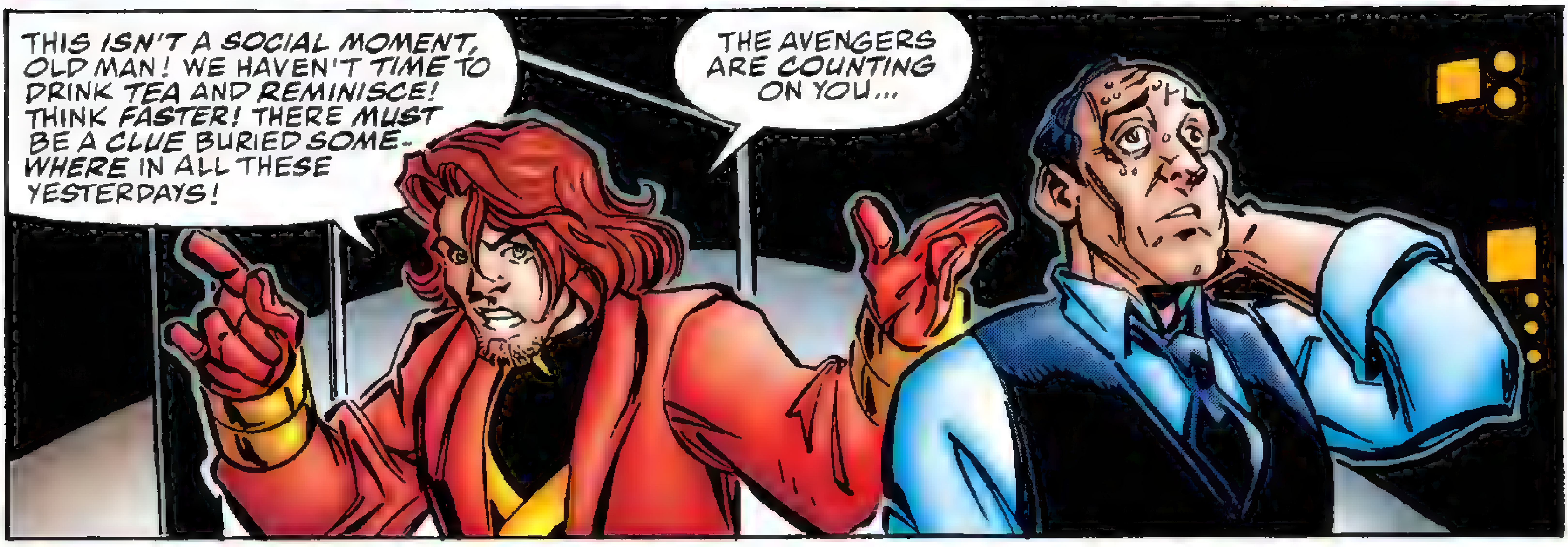
KANG? NO... RAMA-TUT...?
SCARLET CENTURION? IMMORTUS? ALL FOUR ROLLED INTO--
UNNNF!
THWAM!
WOW! WHO THOUGHT I'D LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO SEE A CHRONAL HAYMAKER?
FELT MY LIFE... FLASH BEFORE MY EYES...!
OUR EYES, TOO! I'VE HEARD OF BEING KNOCKED INTO NEXT WEEK--
--BUT THAT WAS AMAZING!
THOR, DON'T LET HIM-- THEM-- TOUCH YOU!
NOT A PROBLEM, MY LADY! I HAVE NOT THE PATIENCE FOR EVEN ONE OF HIM!
TSSSH!
HE THREATENS US NO LONGER!

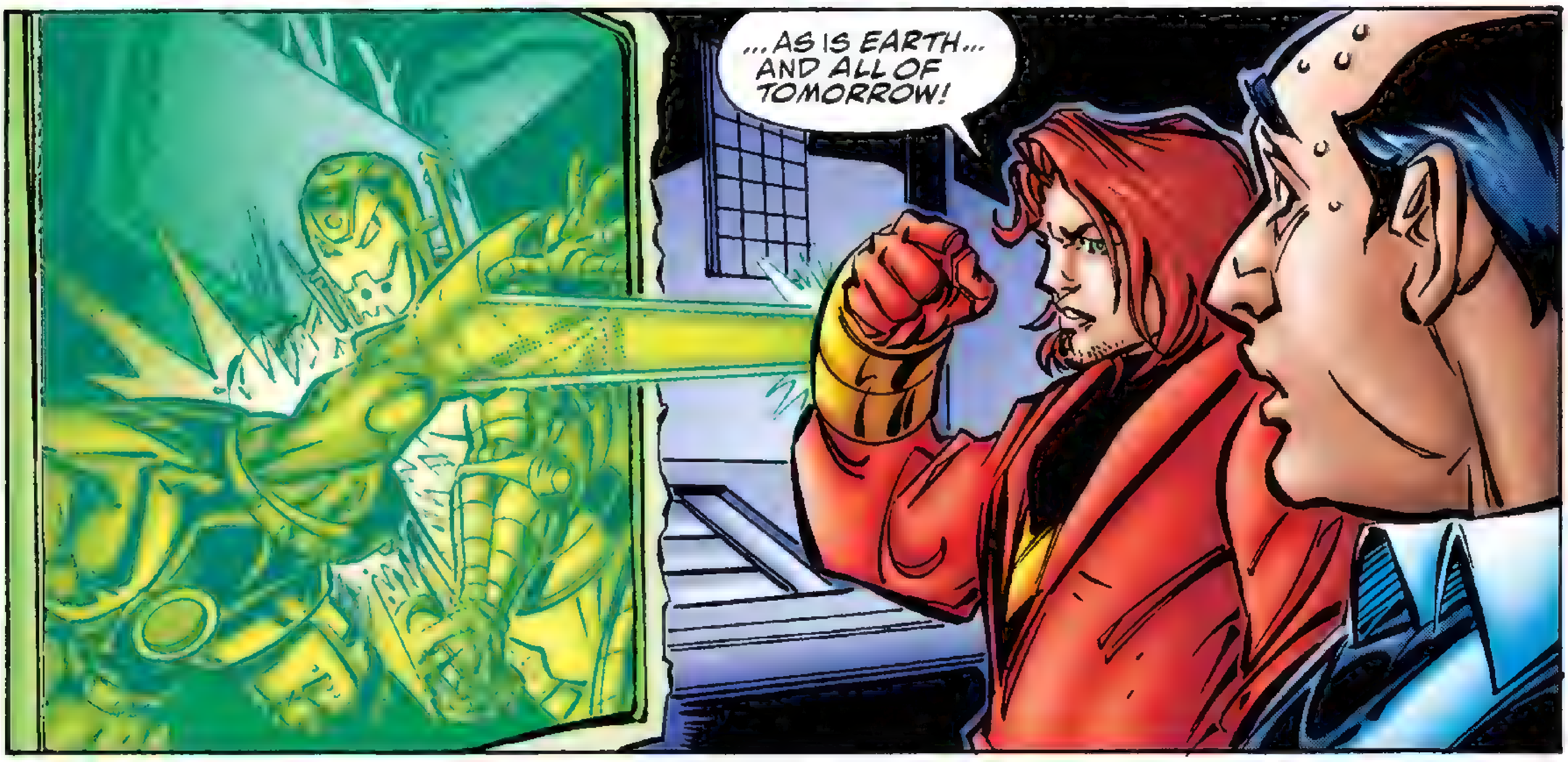
COUNT THE KREE OUT, TOO.
SP-TANG!
NICE! YOU GOT HERE JUST IN TIME, CAP!
THAT'S WHAT MAKES HIM CAP, ISN'T IT? OKAY, PEOPLE--PULL TOGETHER. THE DARKNESS IS GETTING THICKER...
...BUT FOR THE MOMENT, THE VILLAINS ARE THINNING OUT. LET'S HOPE THAT HOLDS. WE'LL NEVER FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON IF WE KEEP BEING TUGGED--
--APART!
FZZAK!
DR. SPECTRUM!
LONG GONE...BUT NOT FORGOTTEN, VISION!

YEAH? WELL, WE'LL FIX THAT! YOU 'N' ME, ROMANOVA? LIKE THE OLD DAYS?
YOU AND I, CLINT! ONE...
...TWO...
...THUGGH!
NO COUNTING! YOU'LL HURT YOUR PUNY EARTHLING BRAINS!
BE WARNED, HYPERION! HAWKEYE ISN'T THE ONLY AVENGER WHO CAN USE A BOW!
AND WHAT I MAY LACK IN SKILL--
--I MAKE UP FOR IN VOLUME!
THUNG! THUNG!
THUNG! THUNG!
OOOH! NICE EYE YOU HAVE THERE!
KZZT
FSSS
TOO BAD FOR YOU IT'S LOOKING THIS WAY!
WOULDN'T YOU SAY, WHIZZER?
FWAM!

CRYSTAL! GET THESE THREE TO THE HOSPITAL--NOW!
BUT--!
THE DARKNESS IS CLOSING IN ALL AROUND THEM! THEY'LL BE OVERTAKEN! DO IT!
WE'LL BE ALL RIGHT! WE STILL OUTNUMBER THEM!
ONLY FOR A MOMENT, CAPTAIN...
...TOO FLEETING!
THE DARK MATTER'S REFORMING ITSELF INTO...
...LAVA MEN?
THAT'S WORSE THAN IT SOUNDS, JAN...
...WHEN THERE'S A HUNDRED OF 'EM!
WHAT DO WE DO NOW?


THINK!
WHO COULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR SETTING THIS DARKNESS FREE? THE STRANGER? THANOS? KANG?
REMEMBER EVERYTHING! EVERY VICTORY, EVERY DEFEAT, EVERY FOE!
SO MUCH TO RECALL... IF I COULD ONLY GATHER MY THOUGHTS... START SLOWLY, FROM THE FIRST--


THIS ISN'T A SOCIAL MOMENT, OLD MAN! WE HAVEN'T TIME TO DRINK TEA AND REMINISCE! THINK FASTER! THERE MUST BE A CLUE BURIED SOMEWHERE IN ALL THESE YESTERDAYS!
THE AVENGERS ARE COUNTING ON YOU...


...AS IS EARTH... AND ALL OF TOMORROW!

"THE END IS FAST APPROACHING--
SONY
SONY
"--AND EVEN THE *MIGHTY* AVENGERS CANNOT HOLD OUT *MUCH* LONGER--
TICKETS PENN STATION
"--AGAINST AN *ENDLESS* LEGION OF ENEMIES!"

"THEY'RE *FALLING*...
"...AND *AS* THEY FALL...
"...SO FALLS THE *WORLD!*"

CAP? A LITTLE HELP? THOR?
VISION? WHERE ARE...?
OH, NO...
GREAT. SO MUCH FOR BACKUP.
BY SHEER FORCE OF NUMBERS--
--WE HAVE BEEN DIVIDED-- COMPLETELY AND TOTALLY--
--ALLOWING US NO CHANCE TO FOCUS ON THE THREAT OF THE DARKNESS ITSELF!
ALREADY, IT HAS NEARLY SWALLOWED THE CITY!

"HOW MUCH FARTHER CAN IT SPREAD?"
ALL ACROSS MANHATTAN, THE QUESTION ECHOES.
AWRIGHT! AWRIGHT! SPIDER-SENSE, I LOVE YA-- BUT TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW!
SOMEONE'S POISONING THE BIG APPLE!
...AND STILL, THE DARKNESS CRAWLS FORTH...
THIS IS ASTOUNDING! IT SEEMS TO BE SOME FORM OF ORGANIC PROTOMATTER, THE ENIGMATIC NATURE OF WHICH--
F'R THE LUVVA MIKE, STRETCHO... IF Y'R GONNA PLAY JEOPARDY, PUT IT IN THE FORM OF A QUESTION!
MEBBE, "IF IT'S EATIN' THE WHOLE DURN BLOCK F'R LUNCH...
"...HOW LONG BEFORE WE'RE THE DESSERT TRAY?"
...ITS EBON TENDRILS REACHING AS FAR AS WAKANDA... WHERE THE BLACK PANTHER STRIVES HOPELESSLY TO PROTECT HIS KINGDOM...
...AS DEEP AS THE SEVEN SEAS, WHERE NAMOR WRESTLES WITH CALIGINOUS CREATURES FIERCER THAN THE MOST SAVAGE SHARK...
...AS WIDE AS THE AMERICAN PLAINS, WHERE SHE-HULK FINDS HERSELF OVERRUN BY A PENUMBRAL WAVE THAT STRETCHES BEYOND THE HORIZON.
THEIR ONLY SALVATION LIES WITH A GOOD MAN...

...PROVIDED HE CAN MANEUVER...
...UNDER THE CRUSHING WEIGHT OF FAILURE.
I CAN'T LET THEM DOWN! I CAN'T! THEY'RE DEPENDING ON ME!
THEIR FIRST VILLAIN--
THERE'S NO NEED TO GO BACK THAT FAR, OLD MAN! I HAVEN'T FOUND THE ANSWER YET! KEEP THINKING!
BUT THE FIRST ADVENTURE--
I SAID I DO NOT NEED TO HEAR ABOUT THAT ONE!
IS THAT CLEAR?

PERFECTLY... AND UNDERSTANDABLY. AFTER ALL, IT'S RATHER AN EMBARRASSMENT, REALLY.
IT WAS SUCH AN EASY CASE...
...ONE THEY DON'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT. IMAGINE...
...OWING YOUR VERY FORMATION TO THE TRANSPARENT MACHINATIONS OF A CHEAP PRANKSTER.
WHAT DID THE WASP CALL HIM?
OH, YES.
A CREAMPUFF.
NORSE GOD OF THE HOTFOOTS.
PERHAPS YOU'VE HEARD OF HIM. THE FOOL'S NAME WAS LOKI, AND HE--
--IS NO FOOL.

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR CLEVERNESS... BUT EXPOSING ME DOES YOU NO GOOD NOW, DOES IT?
EVERYTHING I SAID WAS TRUE! THE AVENGERS' GREATEST FOE--LOKI, THE TRICKSTER GOD--HAS INDEED COME TO HERALD THE EBON DAWN OF A DARK AGE!
I THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP, YOU PATHETIC CRETIN! THE DISTRACTIONS THE AVENGERS FIGHT ARE MINE TO CONTROL--
--BUT YOUR MEMORIES ARE WHAT GAVE THEM FORM--ONCE I FOOLED YOU INTO CHANNELING YOUR KNOWLEDGE THROUGH MY MAGIC!
AAAAAH!
DIVIDE AND CONQUER. THE FIRST TRICK I EVER INVENTED. THE AVENGERS ARE EASY TO DEFEAT--ONCE YOU STOP THEM FROM ACTING AS A TEAM!
NNNNG!
WAM!
YOU'RE OUT OF THE GAME, EDWIN JARVIS!
AFTER ALL-- WHAT OTHER CARDS HAVE YOU TO PLAY?
JUST ONE.
HOPEFULLY...
...A TRUMP.
RED ALERT ENGAGE
BIP!

FOR ABOVE THE DIN OF BATTLE, SEVEN AVENGERS SUDDENLY HEAR THE SCREECH OF A FAMILIAR SOUND FROM THEIR IDENTICARDS--
WHAT? YOU DARE TURN YOUR BACK ON ME?
--A FULL PRIORITY SUMMONS--
GOTTA GO, BOYS! PLAY NICE WHILE I'M GONE!
--TO AVENGERS MANSION!
OKAY, IT'S OFFICIAL! WE'VE LEFT THE CITY IN TOTAL CHAOS-- --AND I DON'T LIKE IT!
WHAT'S SO MAJOR THAT WE'RE ALL NEEDED HERE INSTEAD?
TAKE A LOOK FOR YOURSELF!

WE'VE FOUND THE SOURCE OF THE DARKNESS WE'VE BEEN FIGHTING--
--AND LOKI HIMSELF IS THE GATEWAY!
MY HALF-BROTHER, THE HALF-WIT.
"GATEWAY" IS HARDLY THE TERM, THOR. I STAND BEFORE YOU A LIVING VORTEX, DRAWING MATTER AND ENERGY FROM AN ADJACENT DIMENSION--
--ONE WHOSE DARK ENERGIES COMPLEMENT MY OWN MAGIC!
WITHIN MINUTES, AVENGERS, THE SPREADING BLACKNESS WILL SUBSUME THE PLANET--
--AND THE EARTH SHALL BE MY THRONE!
NOT IF WE CROWN YOU FIRST, LOKI!
AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!

INDEED! WHAT AN... ENCHANTING IDEA!
UH-OH! LOOKS LIKE LOKI'S ASSEMBLED HIS OWN TEAM--
--AND THESE GUYS ARE HEAVY HITTERS!
UNNGH!
FWAM!
AAGH!
"WASP"--TEARING RIGHT THROUGH MY ARMOR? HOW--?
EASY--TOO EASY! THE STATUES ARE COATED IN ADAMANTIUM--

--THE HARDEST SUBSTANCE ON EARTH!
SP-TANG!
IRON MAN, LOOK OUT--!
WE'RE UP AGAINST AN INDESTRUCTIBLE TEAM!
THWAM!
EVERYONE HOLD OFF YOUR OPPONENTS AS LONG AS YOU CAN! IT'S ALL UP TO WANDA NOW!
WHAT?
YOU'VE USED YOUR POWER TO DISRUPT THE MOLECULAR STRUCTURE OF ADAMANTIUM BEFORE. GET READY TO DO IT AGAIN!
AN ORDINARY HULK ALONE COULD KEEP US BUSY FOR HOURS! AN ADAMANTIUM ONE, I DON'T EVEN WANT TO THINK ABOUT!
PUNY HUMANS!
SO HE CAN TALK. BIG DEAL.
HULK--
--SMASH!!

THEN AGAIN, IT'S NOT WHAT HE SAYS--
--IT'S HOW HE SAYS IT!
GET BACK!
KRTHOOM!
READY!
THEN STAND CLEAR, PEOPLE! OKAY, WANDA-- HIT IT!
SOMETHING... SOMETHING'S WRONG! THEY'RE NOT SHATTERING!
THEY'RE... MELTING? WANDA, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
IT'S NOT LIKE I PLANNED THIS! YOU KNOW THE HEX POWER IS UNPREDICTABLE! INSTEAD OF BREAKING UP, THE STATUES HAVE TURNED INTO A LIQUID WAVE--
--AND WORSE--
--IT'S STILL COMING!

TOO PERFECT! THIS IS *TOO PERFECT!*
THE *IRONY* IS *SUBLIME!* STATUES *LOST*, STATUES *REGAINED!*
ONCE THE WAVE *CRESTS*, THE *AVENGERS* WILL BECOME NOTHING MORE THAN *ADAMANTIUM-COATED MEMORIES!*
MAY*BE*, HORNHEAD-- BUT IF ANYONE *REMEMBERS* THE AVENGERS AFTER TODAY--
--LET 'EM REMEMBER THAT WE WENT DOWN *FIGHTING!*
POUR IT ON!

YOU RESIST? WHY BOTHER? YOU ARE NO MATCH FOR ME!
CAPTAIN AMERICA IS POWERLESS! THE WITCH'S ABILITIES ARE RANDOM--DANGEROUS TO THOSE AROUND HER! AND THE PATHETIC GIANT-MAN--!
DON'T LISTEN TO HIM!
HE'S TRYING TO SPLIT OUR RANKS AGAIN! HE'S AFRAID OF US!
HE KNOWS THE MOUNTAINS THE AVENGERS CAN MOVE--
"--WHEN WE WORK AS A TEAM!"
WE'RE THE AVENGERS!
SHOW HIM WHAT THAT MEANS!

NO!
NOOOO!
IT'S WORKING! HE'S PUSHING-- BUT THE WAVE'S BENDING BACK--
--AND SEALING THE ENERGY VORTEX!
I WILL NOT BE CONQUERED BY A BAND OF INSIGNIFICANT EARTHLINGS!
I AM YOUR MASTER! DO YOU HEAR ME? YOUR MASTER!
YOUR MASTEEERRR--
NO, MY BROTHER.
MAY THE ALL-FATHER FORGIVE ME, YOU ARE, AS EVER...
...A TRAGIC PRISONER... OF YOUR OWN TWISTED MALICE.

--CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH ON THE FALLEN, CAP. WIDOW AND HAWKEYE ARE STILL RESTING--
--BUT, KNOWING QUICKSILVER, HE'LL BE HOME BEFORE I SIGN OFF.
THANKS, CRYSTAL. GLAD EVERYONE'S OKAY.
AS AM I. I CANNOT BEGIN TO APOLOGIZE ENOUGH FOR HAVING HELPED LOKI, HOWEVER INADVERTENTLY.
PERHAPS... PERHAPS MY RESIGNATION IS IN ORDER...
WILL YOU LISTEN TO HIM?
NO. JARVIS, YOU BROUGHT THE TEAM TOGETHER WHEN IT REALLY COUNTED.
THAT'S WHAT-- YOU'LL EXCUSE THE EXPRESSION--TURNED THE TIDE TODAY.
"YOUR TIMELY SUMMONS SAVED THE WORLD. THE ADAMANTIUM SEALED OFF THE DARK DIMENSION LOKI UNLEASHED.
"THOR WILL DEAL WITH HIM LATER. AS FOR THE REST OF YOU..."
...I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I'VE NEVER BEEN PROUDER THAN TODAY TO BE A PART OF THIS TEAM.
YOU ALWAYS SAID WE COULD BEAT ANY AND EVERY FOE, CAP. MAYBE YOU DIDN'T MEAN IN THE SAME AFTERNOON...?
I DON'T EVER WANT TO SURVIVE ANOTHER DAY LIKE THIS... BUT IT'S GOOD TO KNOW WE CAN ALWAYS FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT. WE'RE THE AVENGERS.
THAT'S THE JOB.

KNOCK! KNOCK!
THE DOOR? WHO COULD THAT BE?
STAY THERE, JARVIS! I'LL GET IT!
PROBABLY JUST SOME EXTRA-BRAVE DELIVERY...
...BOY...
:KOFF:
CAN I HELP YOU?
IF NOT-- NONE OF US MAY LIVE TO SEE THE MORNING!
MY NAME IS NATE GREY, AND I'VE COME TO WARN YOU--
--THAT PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER-- LEADER OF THE X-MEN-- HAS GONE INSANE!
TO BE CONTINUED-- IN UNCANNY X-MEN #335!

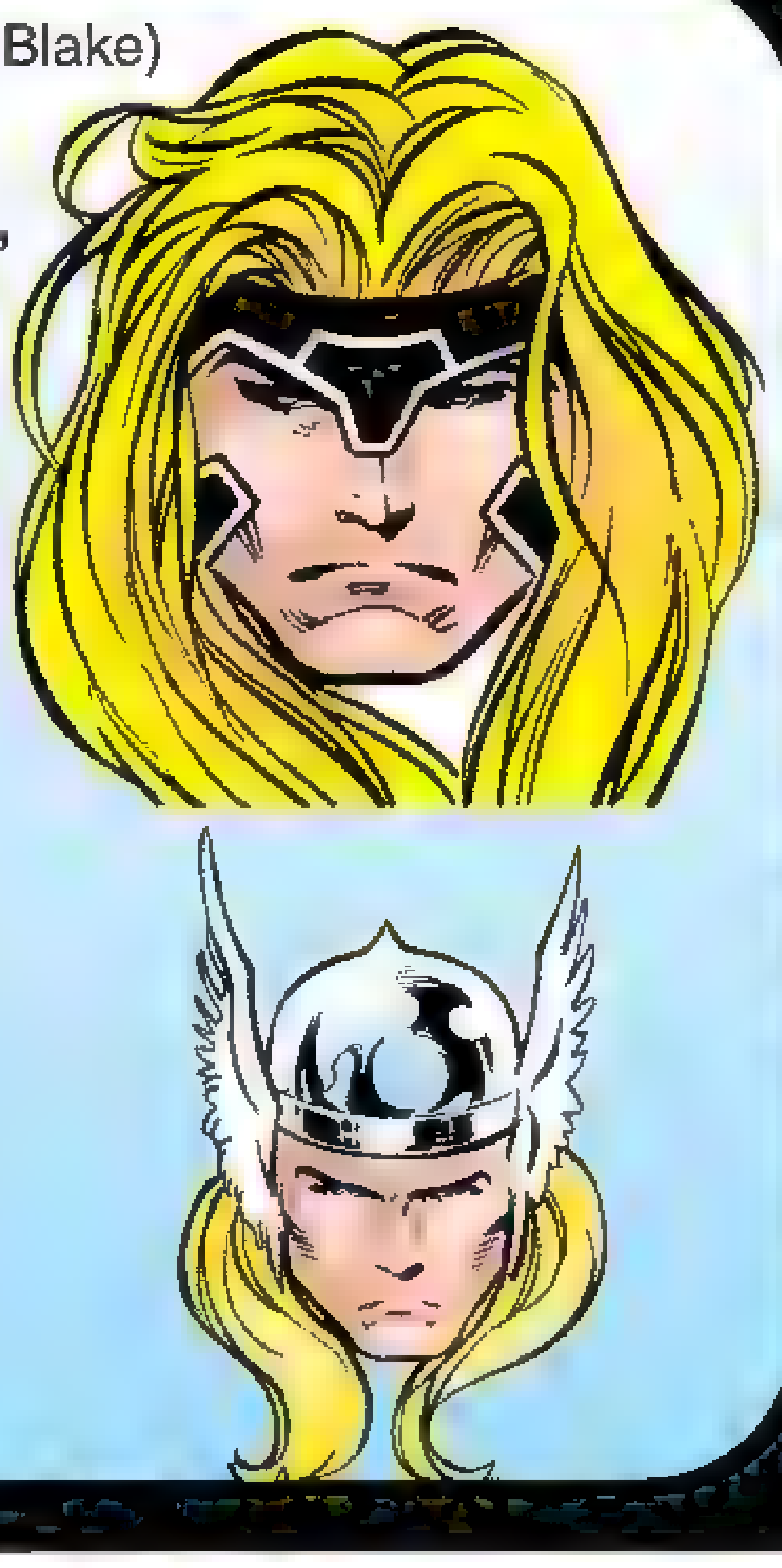
AVENGERS

ROLL CALL

To commemorate 400 issues of Earth's Mightiest Heroes, here is an up-to-the-minute chart of all of the individuals who have been deemed worthy to join (or at least associate with) the ranks of the Avengers—including their secret identities, their past and current membership status, and an index to all of the issues of this title they were in!

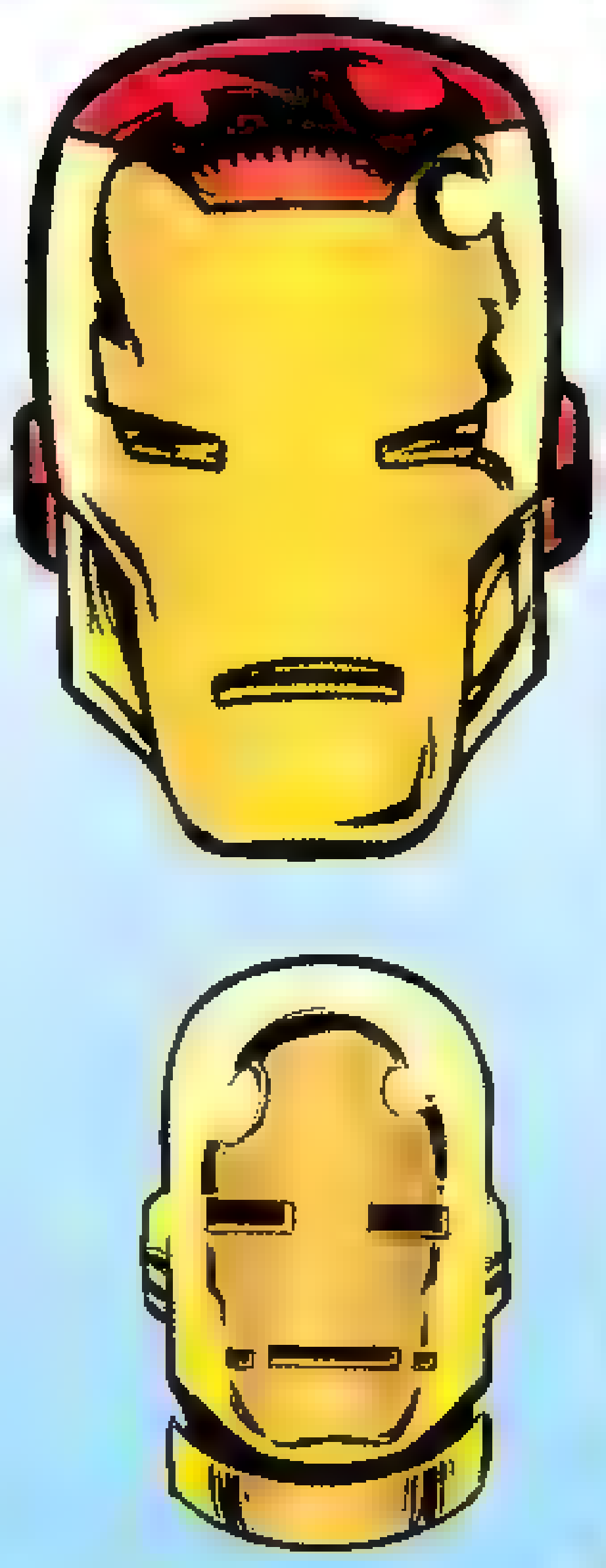
THOR (Sigurd Jarlson, Donald Blake)
Founding member

AV 1-16, 45,51,52,58,66,71, 76,79-82, 84-88, 90, 93-105, 108-116, 118-135, 137-146, 148-151, 159-160, 162, 165-168, 170-177, 179-181, 189, 202, 210-216, 218-222, 224-234, 242-243, 249, 276-285, 291-297, 300-310, 312, 317-318, 326-331, 396-402, Annual 1, 7, 13, 16, 18-20, GIANT-SIZED 1-4, CROSSING, TIMESLIDE, (as Don Blake) AV 199-200



IRON MAN (Anthony Stark)
Founding member

AV 1-10, 12-16, 45, 51, 58, 60, 66-67, 70-71, 76, 79-82, 86-88, 90, 93-135, 137-163, 165, 167-177, 179-185, 189-190, 192-208, 210, 212-229, 267, 280, 312, 314-318, 326-330, 337-340, 345, 347, 391-392, 393, 395-396, 400-402, Annual 1, 6-11, 15-16, 18-19, GIANT-SIZED 1-4, CROSSING, (as Tony Stark) AV 52, (as 19-year-old Tony Stark) TIMESLIDE, AV 395

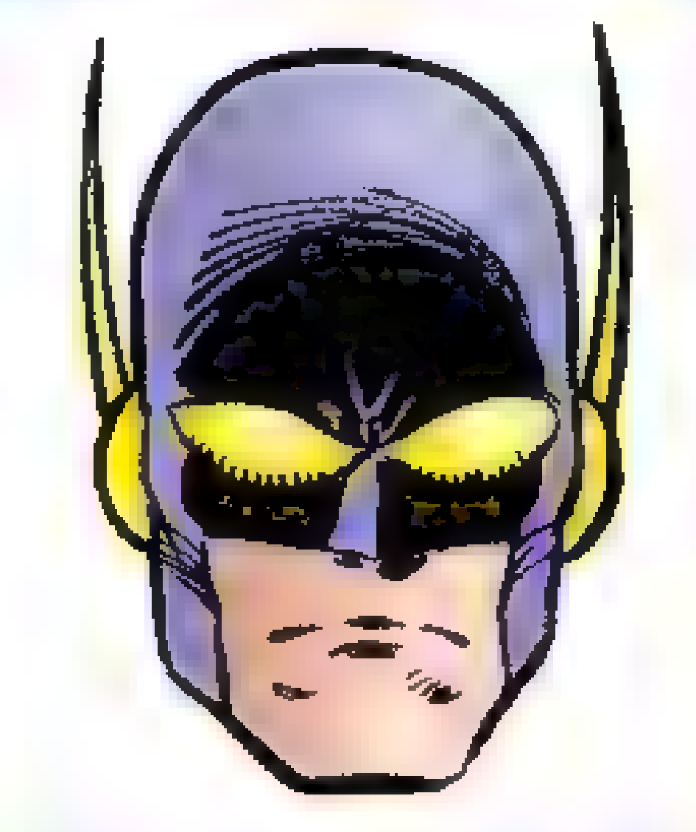


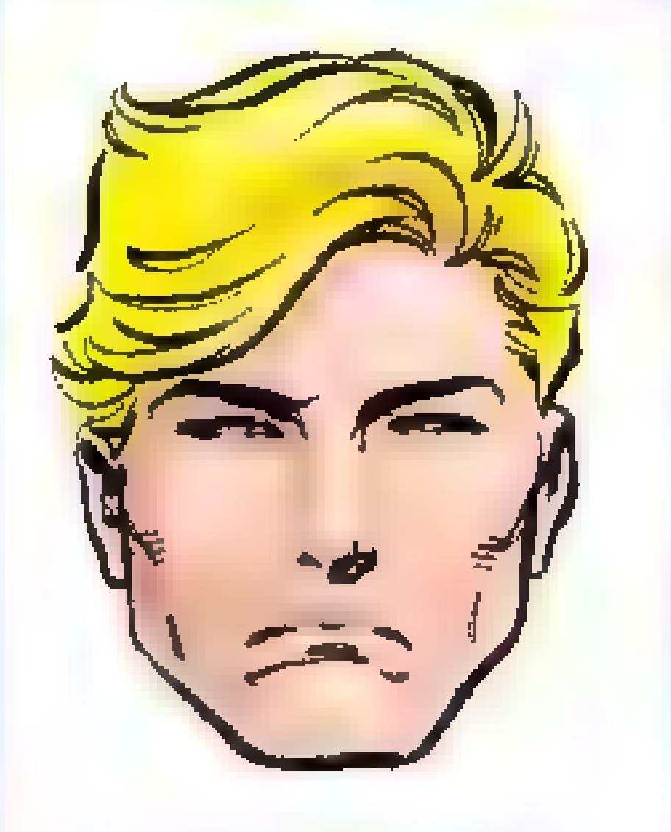
GIANT-MAN (Henry Pym)
Founding member

(as Ant-Man I) AV 1, 93, 100, 223-224, (as Giant-Man I) AV 2-16 (as Goliath I) AV 28-58, Annual 1-2, (as Yellowjacket I) AV 59-60, 63-75, 90-91, 137-141, 146, 148, 150-160, 164-167, 170-177, 179-182, 189, 195-197, 199-201, 211-213, Annual 6, 8-9, (as Yellowjacket I, expelled member) AV 214, 217, (as Henry Pym) AV 26, 192, (as Henry Pym, expelled member) AV 222, 224, 227-230, 240-242, Annual 13, 15, (as Doctor Pym) AV 302-303, 305-306, 308, 312-314, 329, 332, 335-338, 345, 363, Annual 18-19, (as Giant-Man) AV 367-375, 378, 383-384, 388, 390-402, Annual 23, CROSSING, TIMESLIDE

ANT-MAN

GOLIATH


YELLOWJACKET

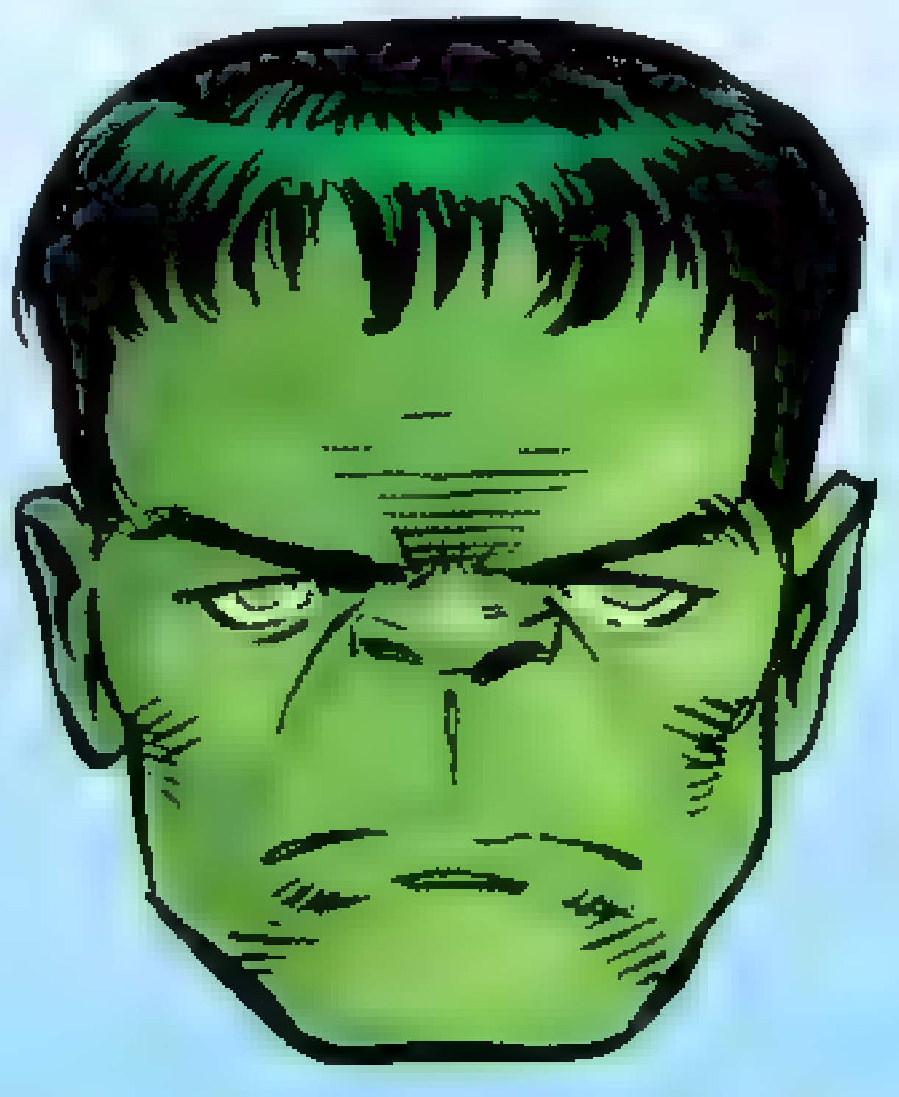

HANK PYM

WASP (Janet van Dyne)
Founding member

AV 1-16, 26, 28-60, 63-75, 83, 90-91, 100, 137, 139-141, 146, 148, 150-151, 153-162, 164, 166-167, 170-177, 179-187, 190-208, 210-214, 217-238, 240-251, 256-264, 266-278, 280, 283-285, 305-306, 308, 312-314, 329, 332, 340, 345, 390-391, 393-402, Annual 1-2, 6, 8, 11-16, 19

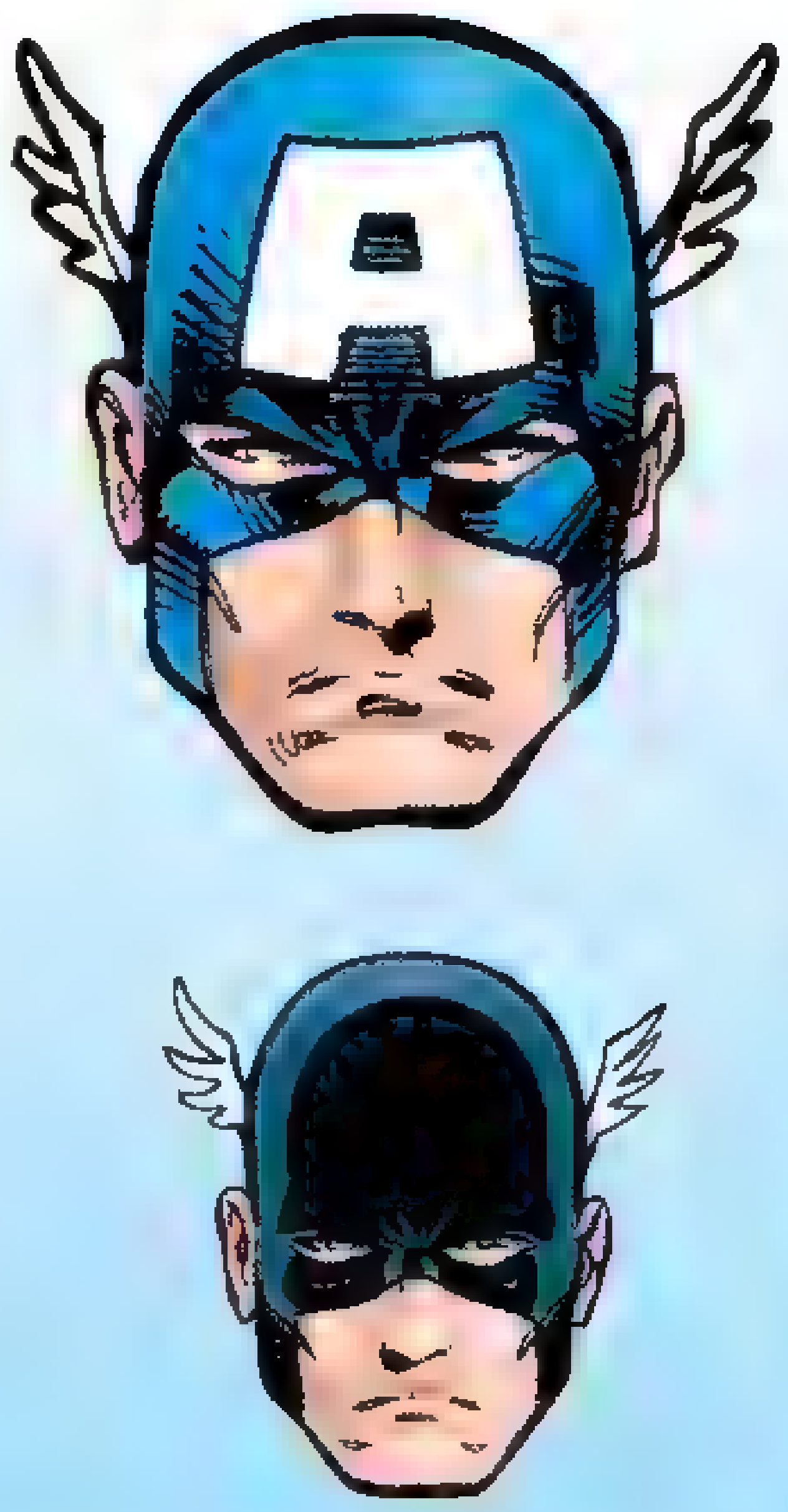
HULK (Robert Bruce Banner)
Founding member

(as member) AV 1-2, 100, 280, Annual 17-18, (as adversary) AV 3-4, 17, 51, (Hulk clones) Annual 13



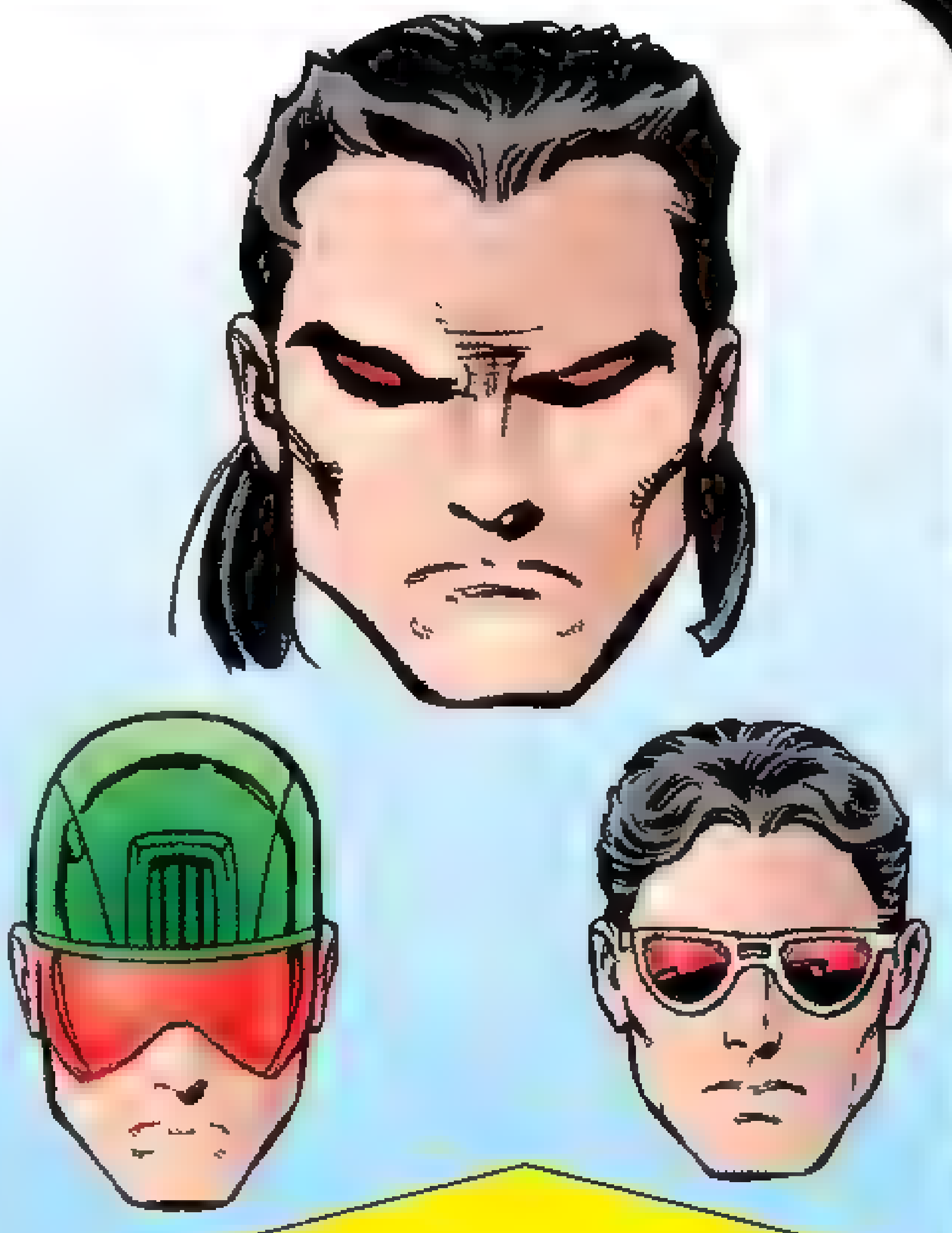
CAPTAIN AMERICA
(Steve Rogers)
First recruit

AV 4-38, 40, 42-47, 51-52, 56, 58, 60, 69-72, 75-76, 78-82, 85, 88, 90, 93-104, 106-108, 110-119, 121, 125-126, 137, 141-157, 159-161, 164-165, 167-172, 174-177, 181-208, 210-217, 219-237, 242-245, 251-272, 274-285, 301-310, 312-347, 360-375, 378, 380, 382, 386-388, 395, 399-402, AV Annuals 1-2, 6-16,18-21, 23, Giant-Sized 1, TIMESLIDE, (as Nomad) AV 131, (as The Captain) AV 290, 298-300, Annual 17



WONDER MAN
(Simon Williams)
Second recruit

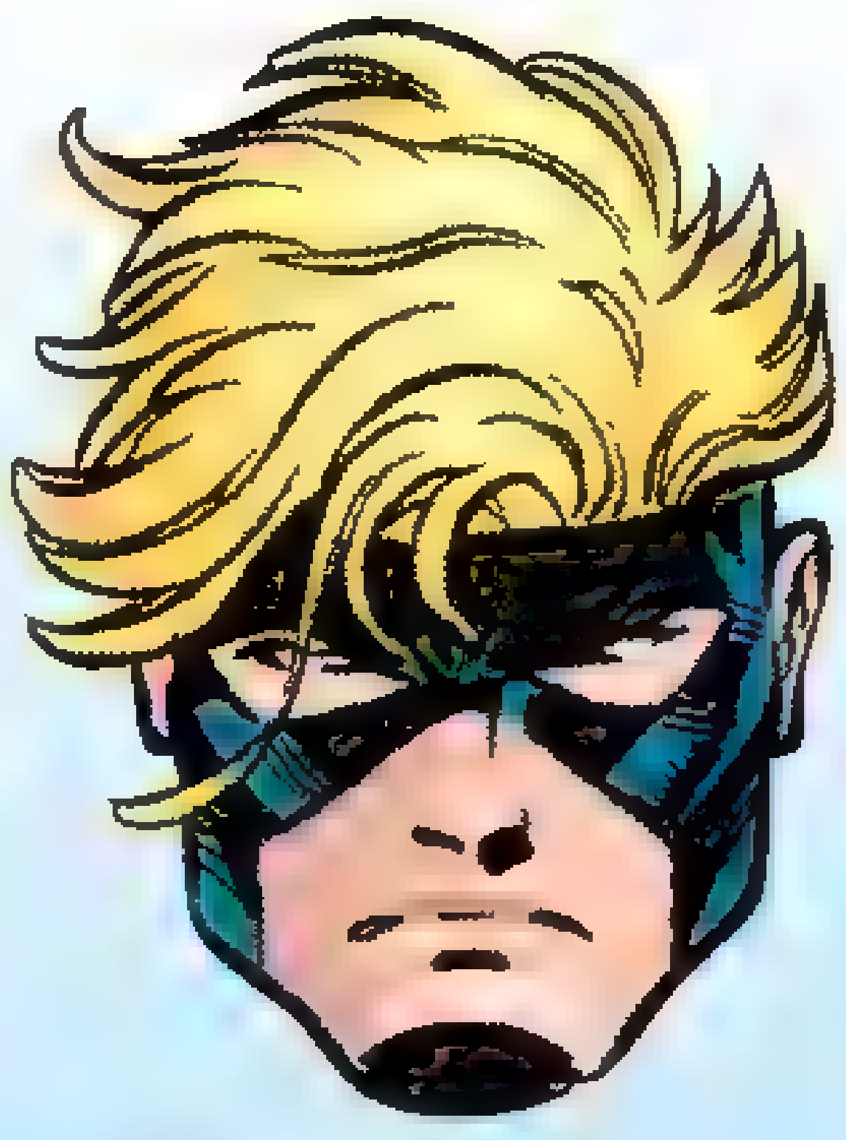
Joined AVENGERS #16, AV 9, 151-162, 164-168, 170-173, 175-178, 180-182, 187-189, 192-196, 198-201, 203-211, 239, (as West Coast Avenger) 250, 253-255, 302, 305-308, 313, 329, 332-333, 345, 347, Annual 6, 8-10, 15-16, 18-19, (comatose) AV 102, 107-108

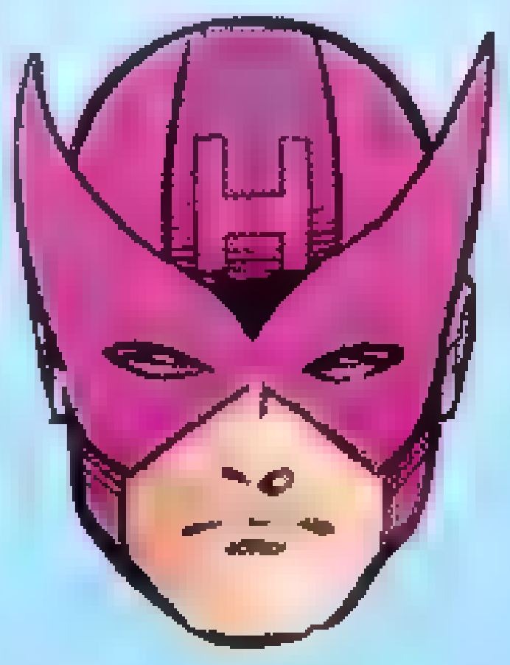


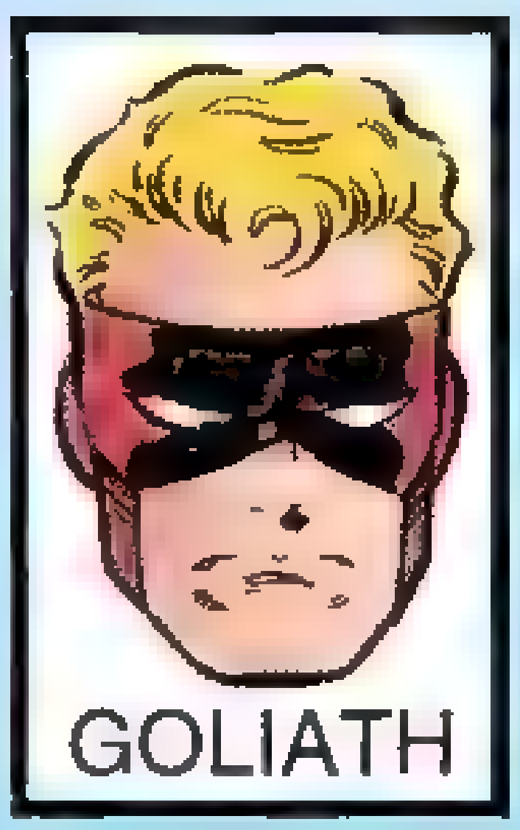
Killed in action in FORCE WORKS #1

HAWKEYE (Clint Barton)
Third recruit

Joined AVENGERS #16, (as Hawkeye) AV 16-62, 98-100, 102-110, 130-135, 137, 142-147, 151, 161-162, 168, 170, 172, 174-177, 181-182, 184-185, 189, 198-200, 202-204, 211, 221-227, 229-234, 239, 242-244, 246, (as West Coast Avenger) 250, 253-254, 280, 302, 305, 309, 313, 329, 332-333, 345, 369, (as non-member) 393-395, (as Avenger) 397-402, Annuals 1-2, 8-10, 15-16, 18-19, GIANT-SIZED 2-4, CROSSING, (as Goliath II) AV 63-75, 77-88, 90-97, 345, 347, (as Hawkeye, as Defender) AV 116-118



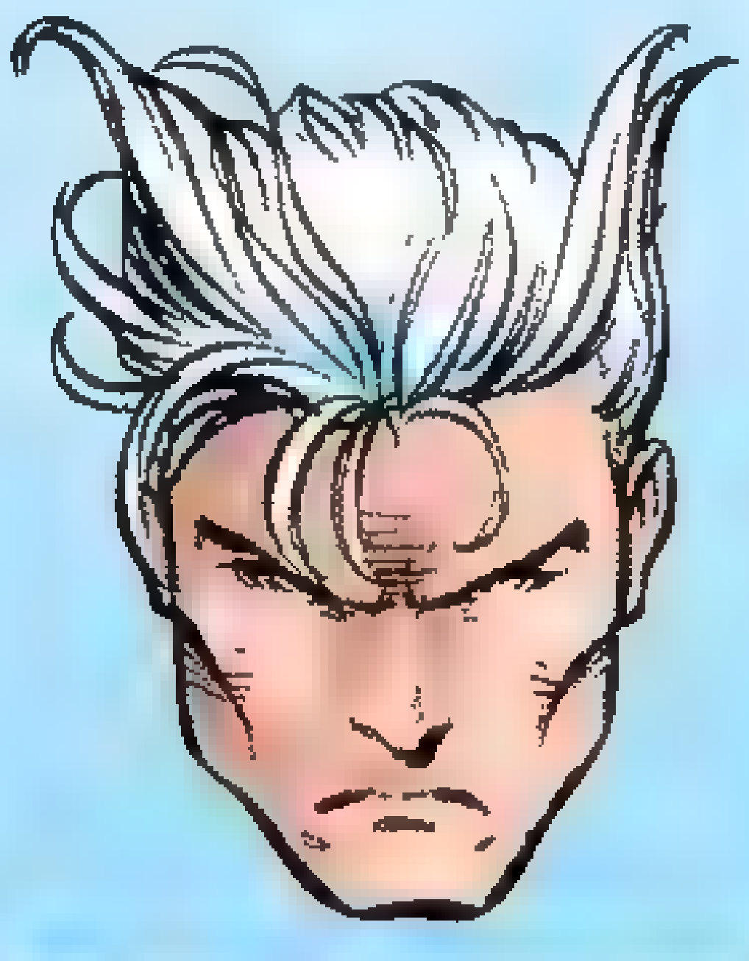




Reformed enemy

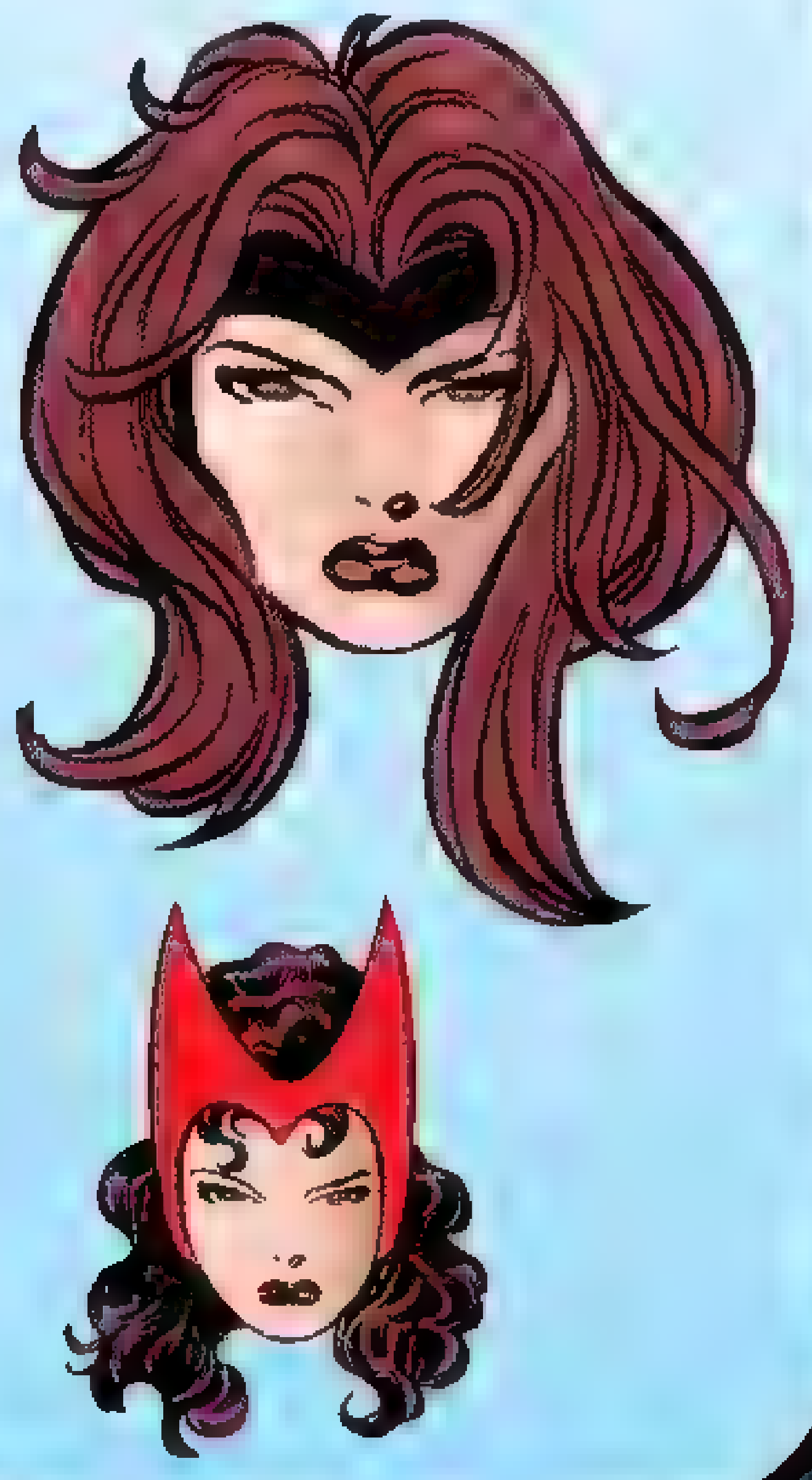
QUICKSILVER
(Pietro Maximoff)
Fourth recruit

Joined AVENGERS #16, AV 16-32, 36-49, 53, 75-104, 110, 127, 137, 170, 172, 174-177, 181-182, 185-188, 243-245, 280, 329, 332-334, 343, 372-375, 377-378, 380-396, 398-402, Annual 1, 8, 12, 19, CROSSING



SCARLET WITCH
(Wanda Maximoff)
Fifth recruit

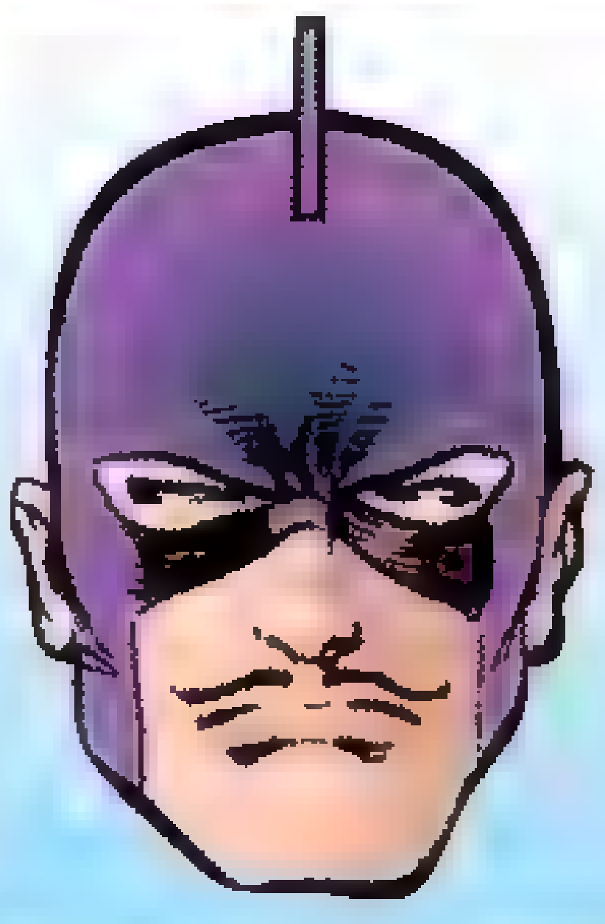
Joined AVENGERS #16, AV 16-32, 36-49, 53, 75-130, 133-135, 137-161, 163-168, 170-177, 179-182, 185-192, 197-198, 200-202, 204-211, 228, 231, 233-238, 240-255, 280, 305-306, 308, 312-313, (as West Coast Avenger) 332-333, 345, 347, 368-369, (as member) 397-402, Annuals 1, 6-7, 9-10, 18, GIANT-SIZED 1-2, 4, CROSSING



Killed in action in GIANT-SIZED #2

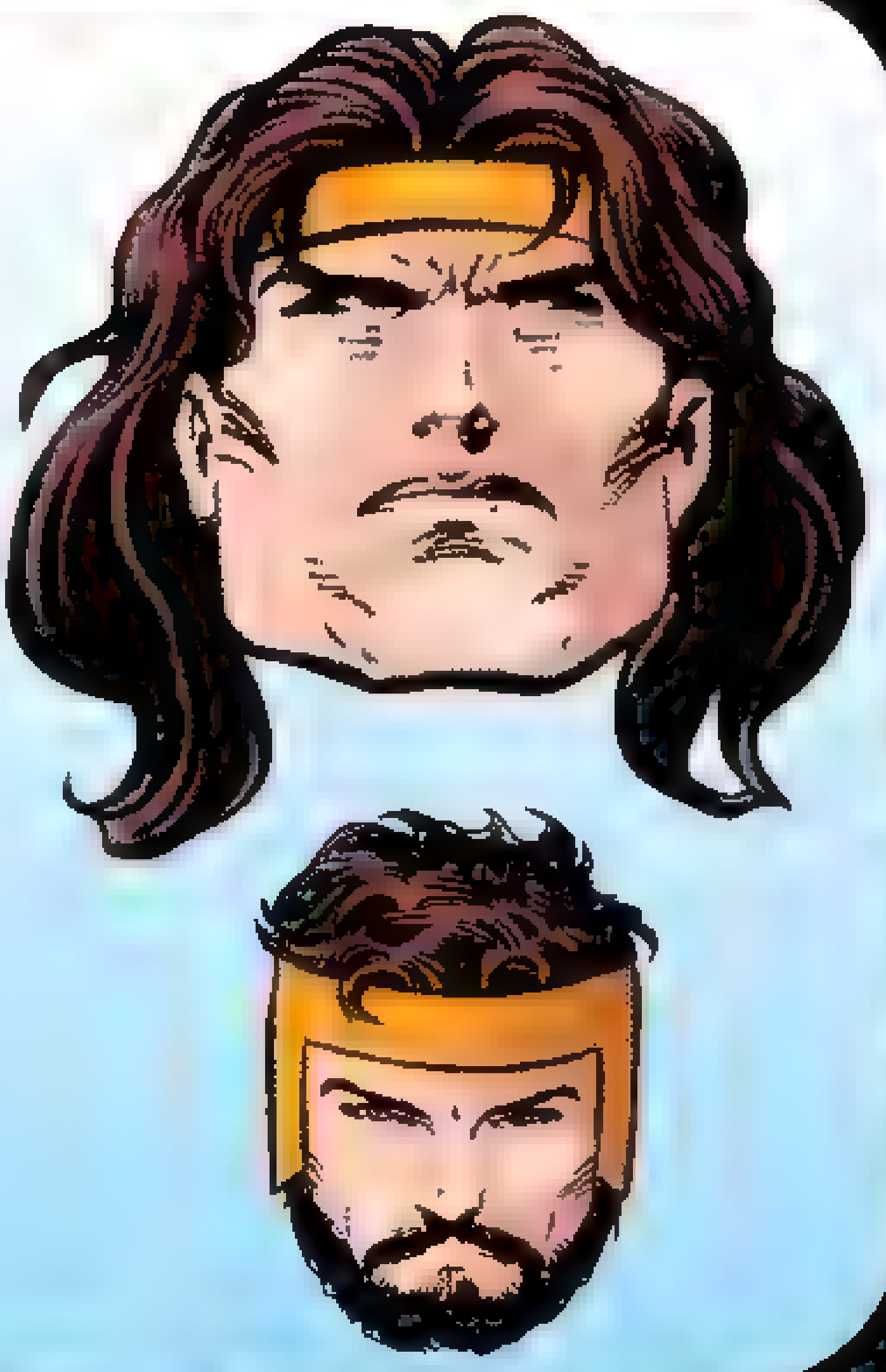
SWORDSMAN
(Jacques Duquesne)
Sixth recruit

Joined AVENGERS #20, (as adversary) AV 19-20, 29-30, 38, 65, 78-79, (as non-member) AV 112-113, (as member) AV 20, 100, 114-129, GIANT-SIZED 2



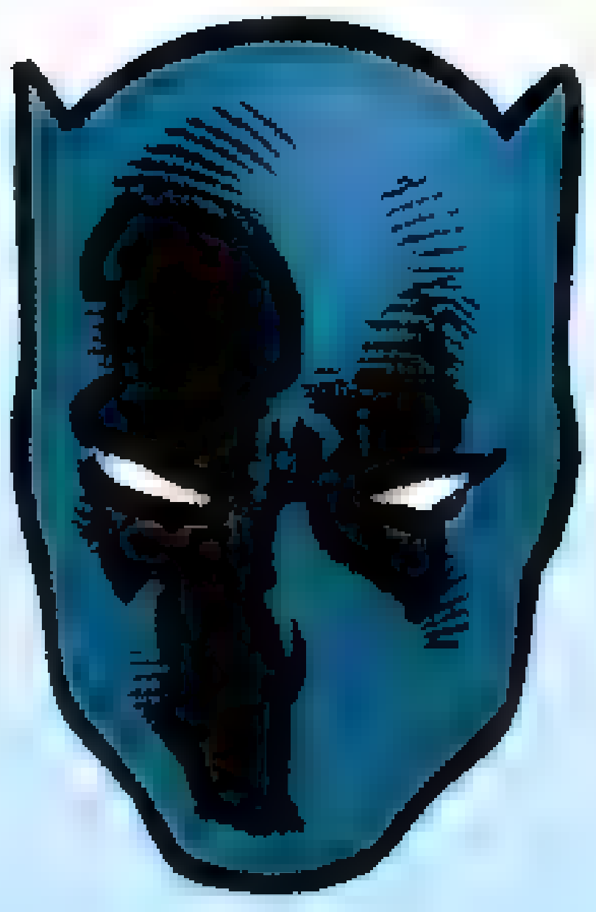
HERCULES (Harry Cleese)
Seventh recruit

Joined AVENGERS #45, (as non-member ally) AV 38-44, AV Annual 1, (as member) AV 45-50, 98-100, 137, 173-177, 181, 211, 249-279, 281, 283-285, 329-330, 332-340, 343-375, 378-382, 384-391, 393-395, Annual 1, 14-15, 17, 19-23, TIMESLIDE, (as Champions member) AV 151, 163



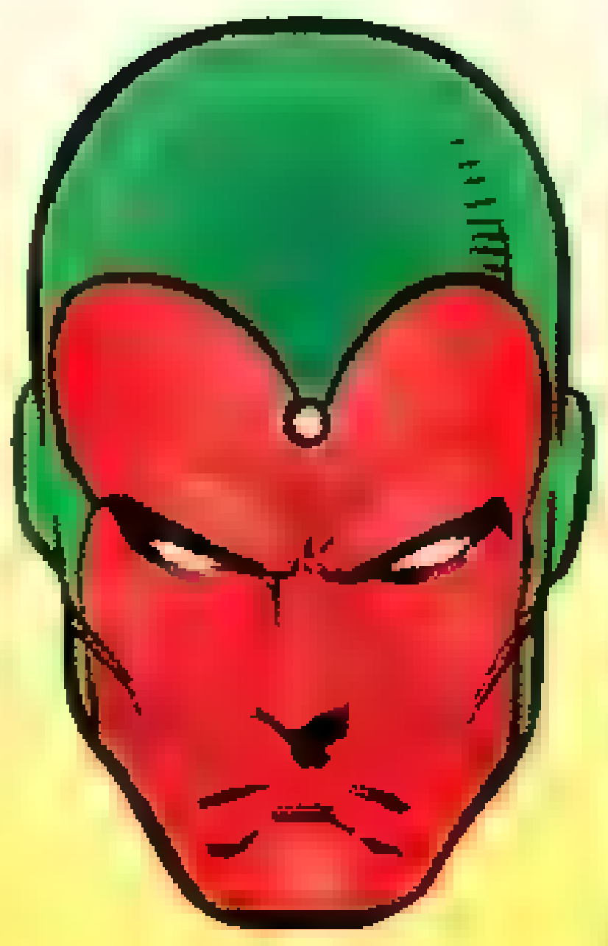
BLACK PANTHER
(T'Challa, Luke Charles)
Eighth recruit

Joined AVENGERS #52, (as non-member ally) AV 51 (as member) AV 52-65, 68-71, 73-88, 100, 105-119, 121-126, 137, 159-162, 164-165, 169, 173-177, 179-181, 211, 239, 280, 305-308, 333, 335-339, 356, 394, Annual 2, 8, 18, (as Luke Charles) AV 172



THE VISION (Victor Shade)

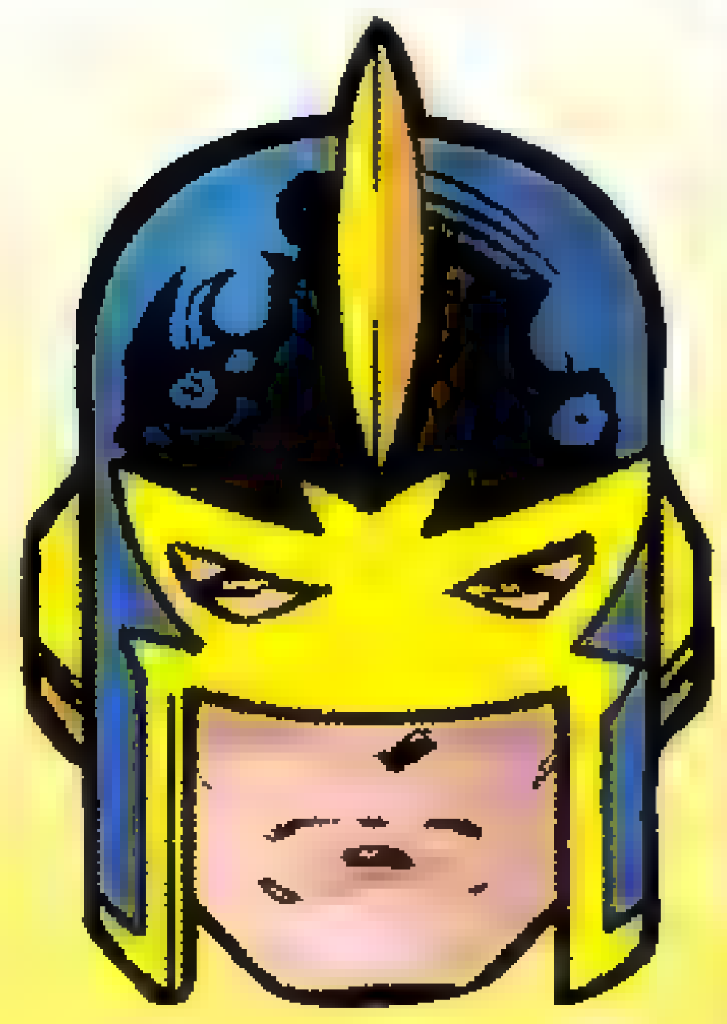
Ninth recruit



Joined AVENGERS #58, (as adversary, then non-member ally) AV 57, (as member) AV 58-103, 105-116, 118-135, 137-140, 142-147, 149-161, 166-168, 170-172, 174, 176-177, 179-182, 184-186, 189-206, 209-211, 228, 233-234, 236, 238-241, 243-255, 280, 305-306, 308, 312-325, 329-339, 341-345, 347-361, 363-366, 368-369, 372, 383, 391-395, 397-402, Annuals 6-7, 9-10, 13, 18-23, GIANT-SIZED 2-4, CROSSING, TIMESLIDE

BLACK KNIGHT

(Dane Whitman)
Tenth recruit

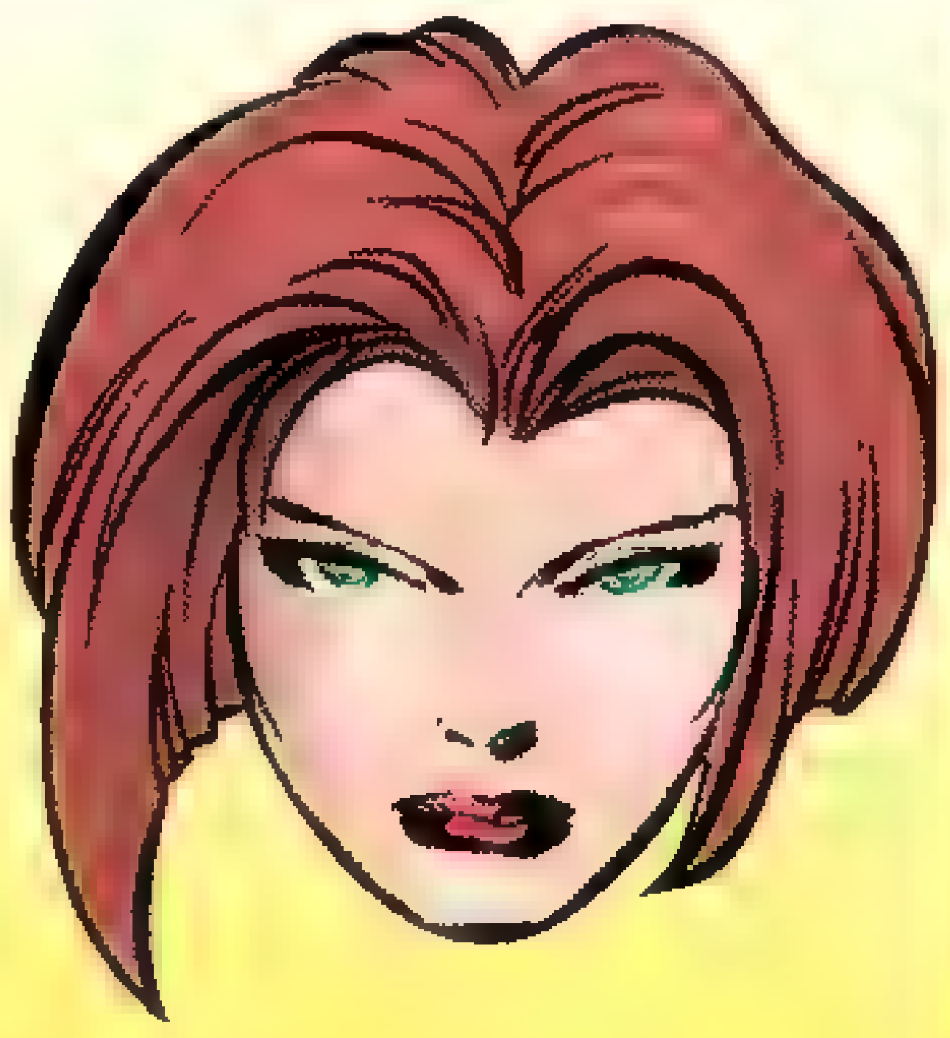


Joined AVENGERS #71, (as Dane Whitman, non-member) AV 47, (as non-member ally) AV 48, 54-55, 61-62, 70, (as member) AV 71, 84-85, 100, 225-226, 255-279, 281-288, 290-297, 329-330, 332-333, 336-339, 343-366, 368-375, 380, Annuals 14-16, 21-22

Ally turned enemy

BLACK WIDOW (Natasha Romanova, Natasha Romanoff)

Eleventh recruit

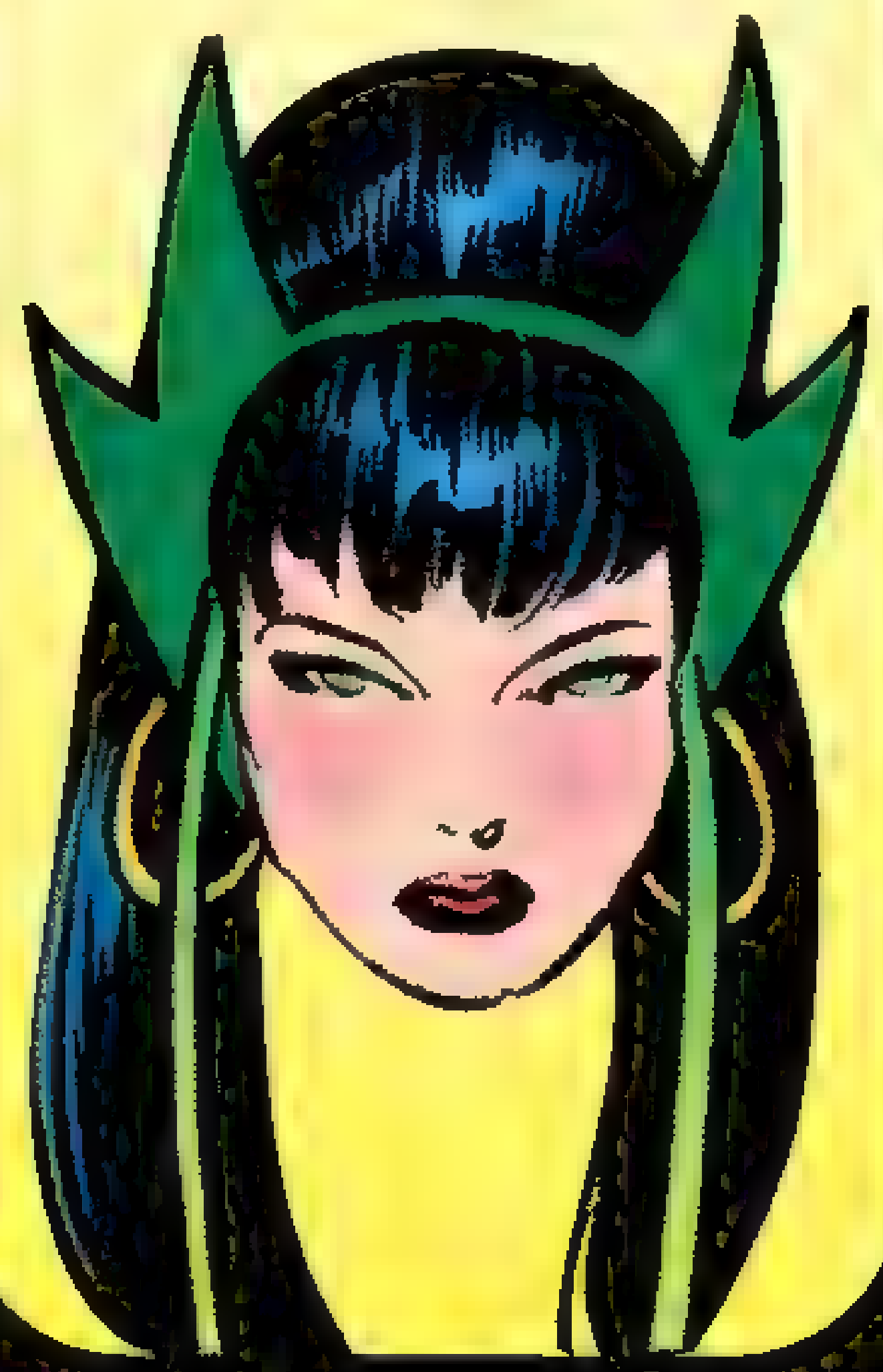


Joined AVENGERS #111, (as adversary) AV 29, (as non-member ally) AV 32-33, 36-38, 40-47, 52, 57, 63-64, 76, 83, (as member) AV 111-112, 137, 173-177, 181, 211, 221, 239, 305, 313, 329-339, 341-345, 348-351, 355-369, 372-375, 378-380, 382, 384-389, 391, 393-395, 397-402, Annuals 18, 20, 22, CROSSING, TIMESLIDE, (as Champions member) AV 151, 163

MANTIS

(Real name classified)
Twelfth recruit

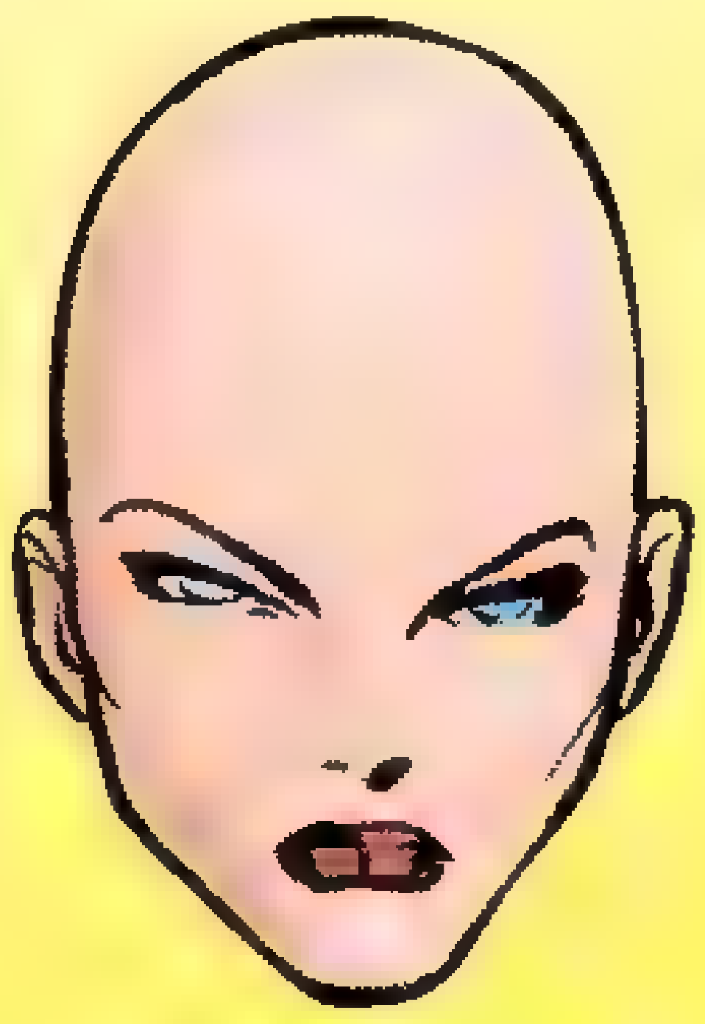
Active AVENGERS #114, (as non-member) AV 112-113, (as member) AV 114-135, GIANT-SIZED 1-4, (as adversary) AV 392-395



MOONDRAGON

(Heather Douglas)
Thirteenth recruit

Joined AVENGERS #137, (as non-member) AV 125, 133-135, (as member) AV 137-144, 148-149, 151, 172, 174-177, 181, 211, 219-220, 305, 345, Annual 7



Reformed enemy

BEAST

(Henry "Hank" McCoy)
Fourteenth recruit

Joined AVENGERS #137, (as X-Man) AV 53, 60, (as member) AV 137-149, 151, 153-161, 165-168, 170-172, 178, 180-201, 203-211, 231, 239, 280, 305, 335-339, Annuals 6-10, 13, 17, (as Defender) AV Annual 11

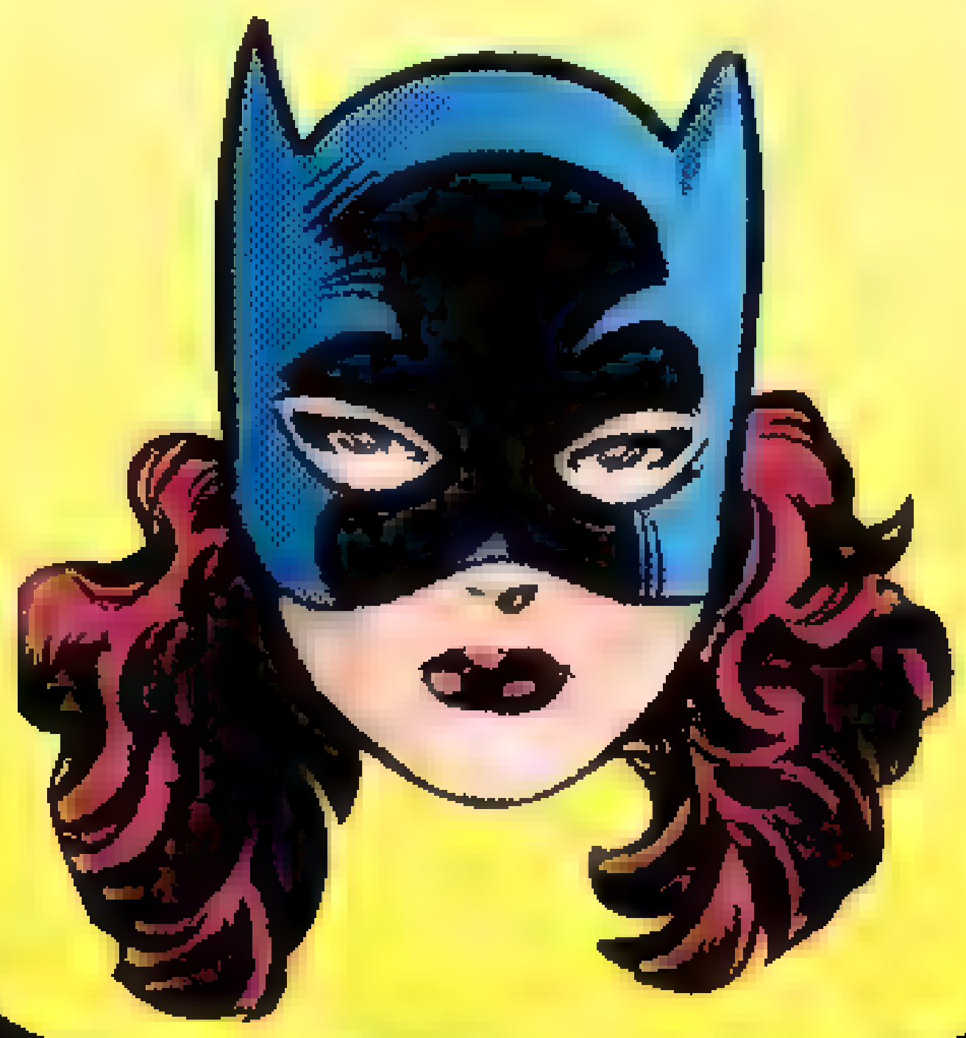
Now with the X-MEN

HELLCAT

(Patsy Walker)
Fifteenth recruit

Current fate unknown

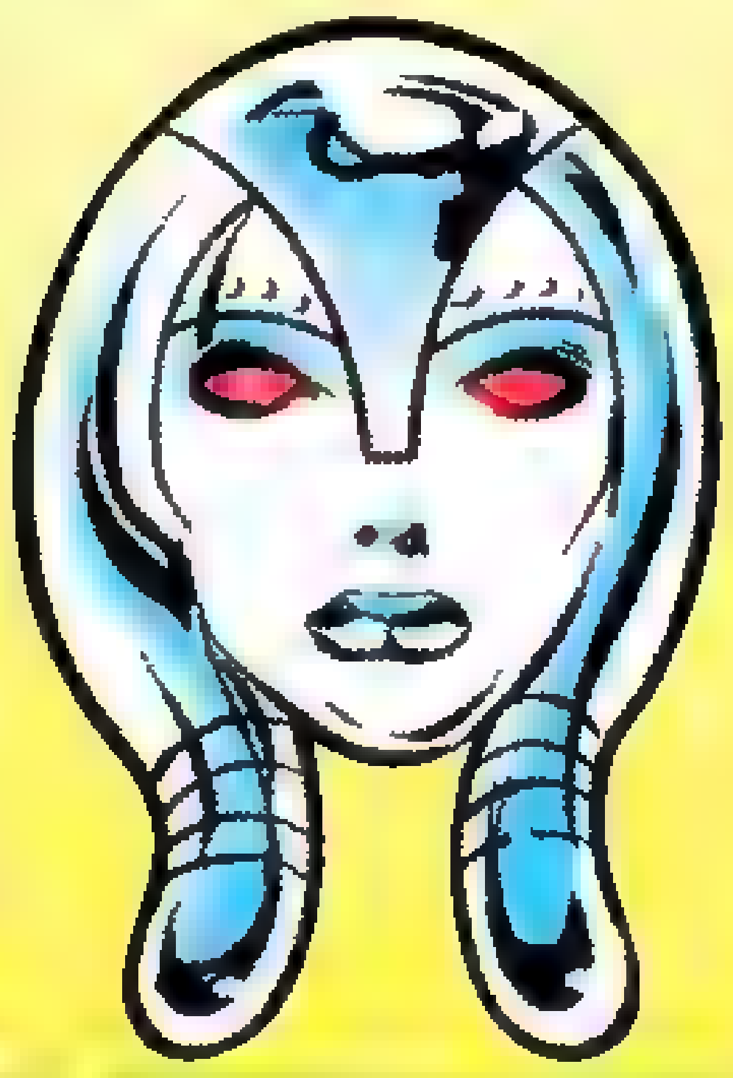
Joined AVENGER #151, (as Patsy Walker) AV 139-143, (as Hellcat, non-member ally) AV 144-150, (as member) AV 151, 305, 313



JOCASTA

Avengers associate

(Avengers ally) AV 170-171, 174-176, 181-182, 185, 189, 194-205, 208, 210-211, Annuals 10, 17



Currently in the STARJAMMERS

MS. MARVEL

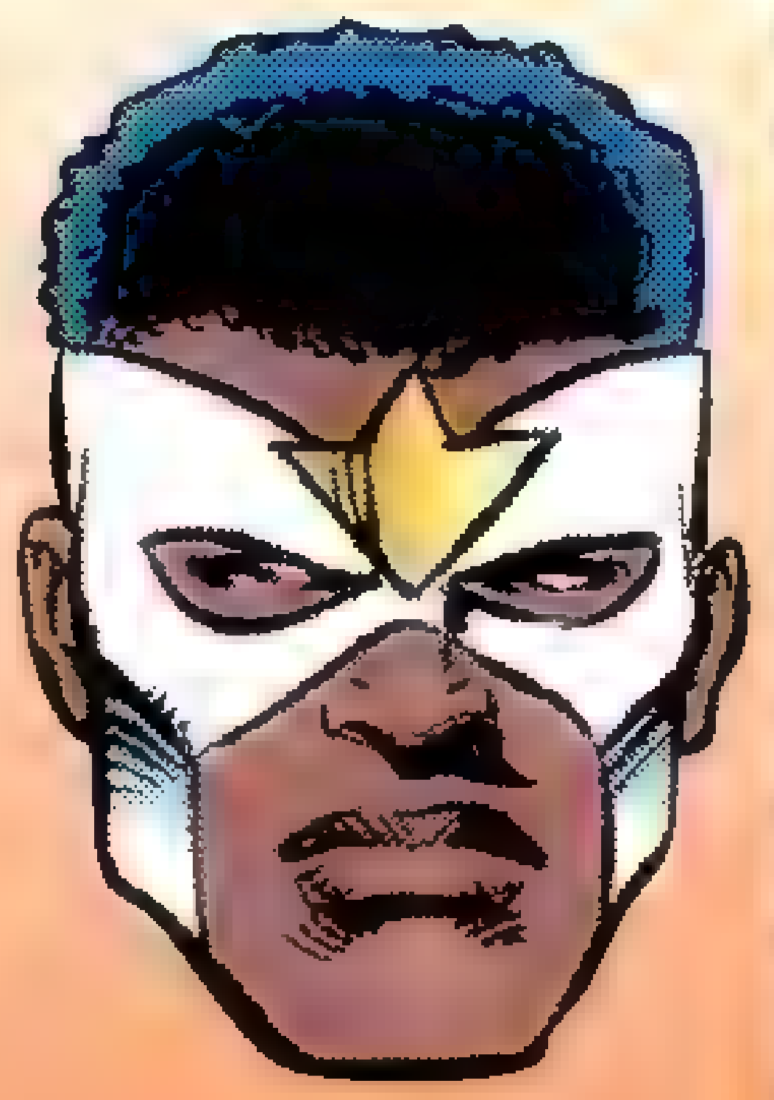
(Carol Danvers)
Sixteenth recruit

Joined AVENGERS #183, (as Carol Danvers, non-member) AV 90, (as Ms. Marvel, as member) AV 171-172, 175-177, 181, 183-188, 190-198, 200, (as Binary, non-member ally) AV 348, 350-

Now known as **BINARY**

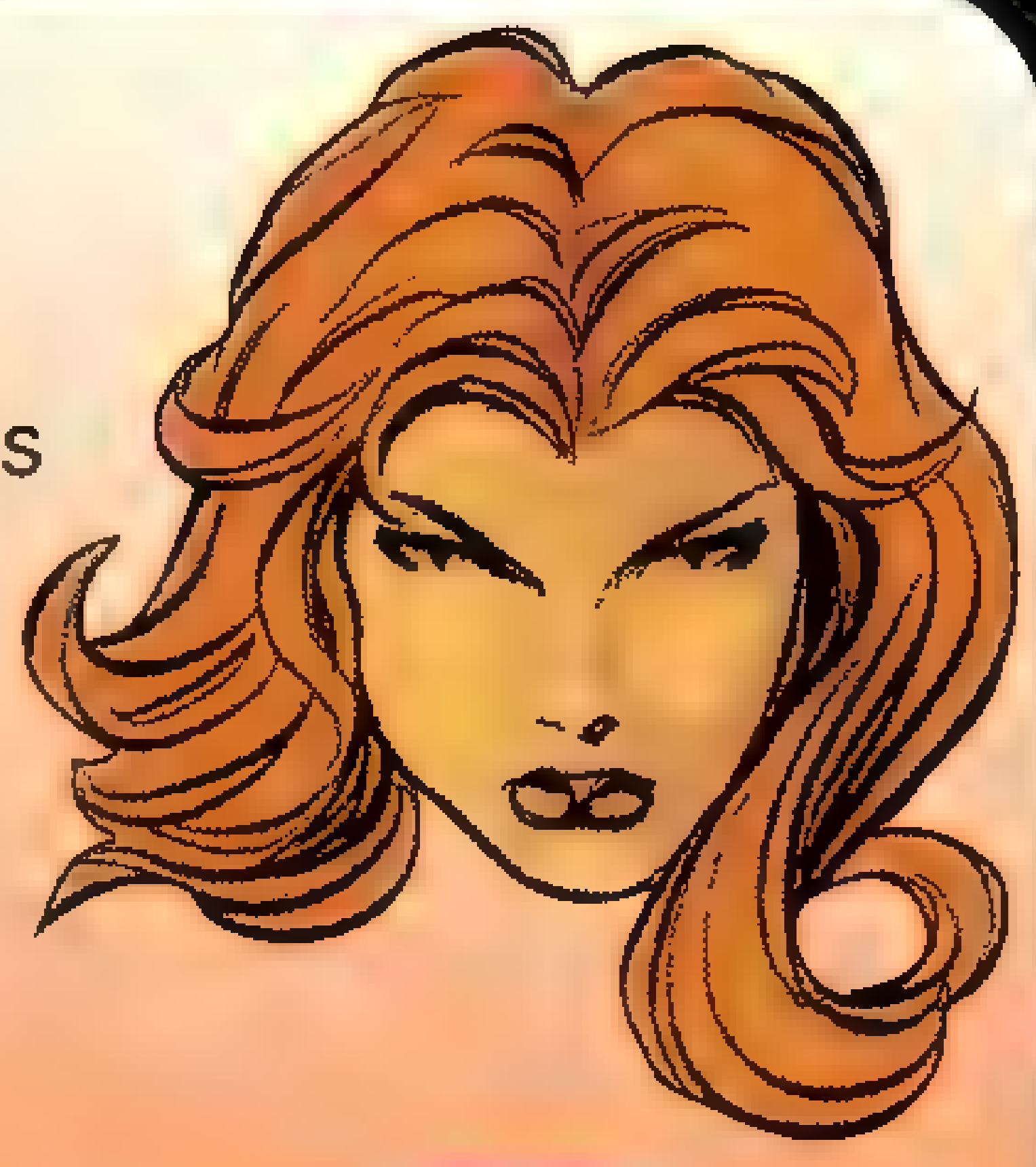
FALCON
(Sam Wilson)
Seventeenth recruit

Joined AVENGERS #184, AV 183-194, 305, 312, 329, 332-333, 341-342, 345, 387-388, Annual 17, 19



TIGRA
(Greer Nelson)
Eighteenth recruit

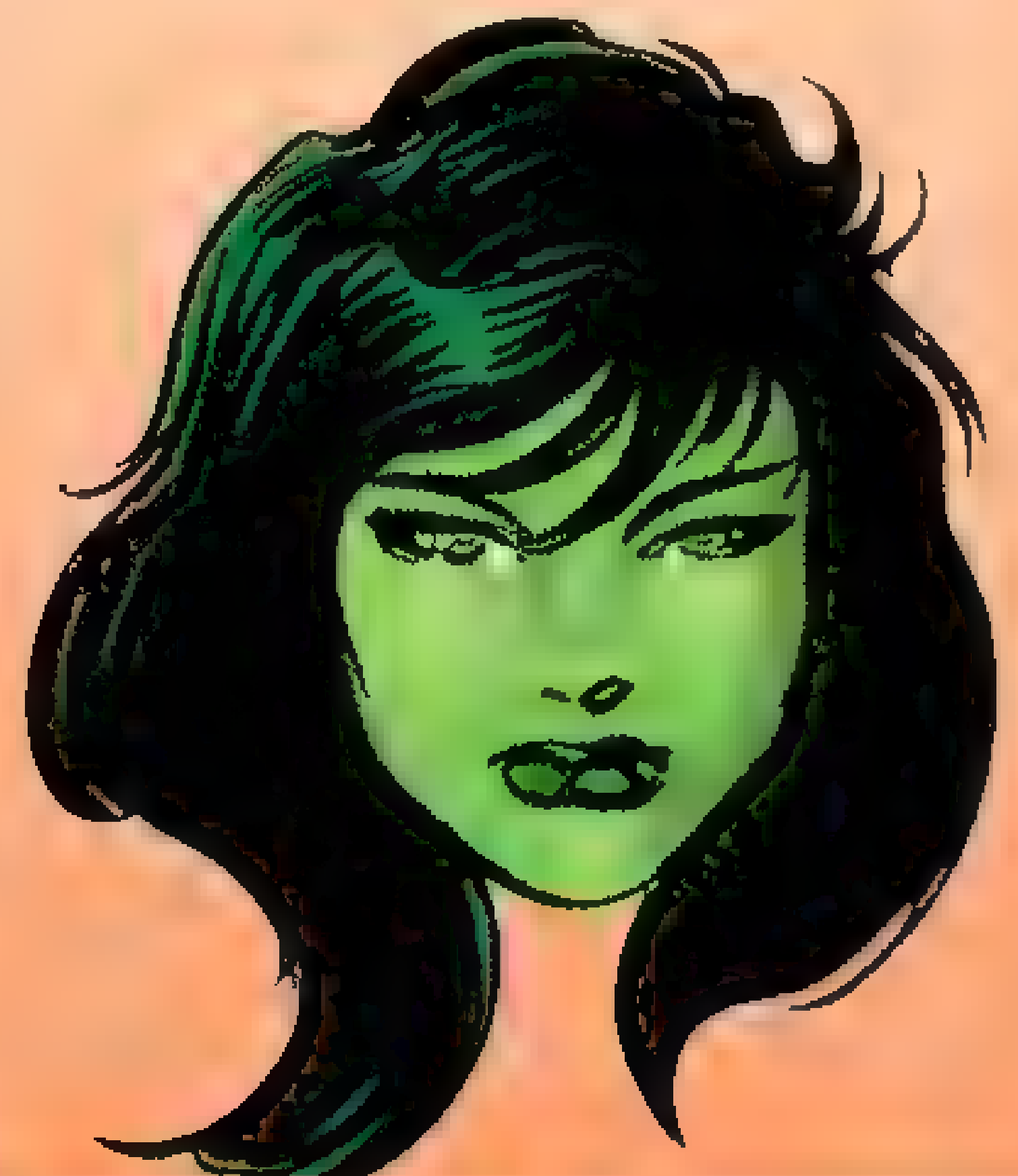
Joined AVENGERS #211, Joined West Coast Avengers in WCA LS #1, AV 211-216, (as West Coast Avenger) 238, 240-243, 250, 253-254, 302, 305-306, 308, 329, 332-333, Annual 15-16, 18



WEST COAST AVENGER

SHE-HULK (Jennifer Walters)
Nineteenth recruit

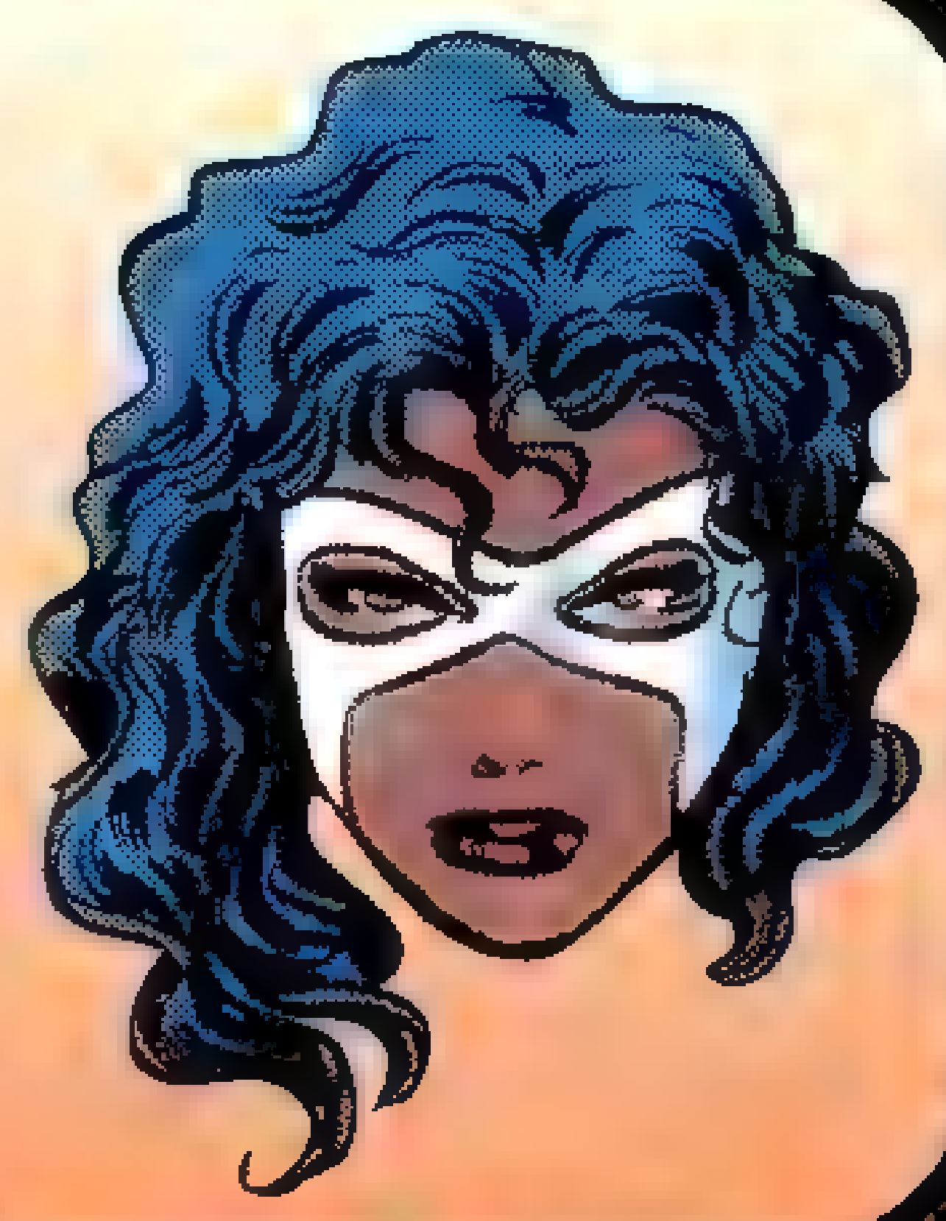
Joined AVENGERS #221, (as member) AV 221-238, 240-243, 254, 259, 278-279, 281-287, 289-297, 305-310, 325-333, 340, 345, Annuals 12-13, 16, 18-19, (as FF member) AV 246-247, 266, Annual 14



CAPTAIN MARVEL II
(Monica Rambeau)
Twentieth recruit

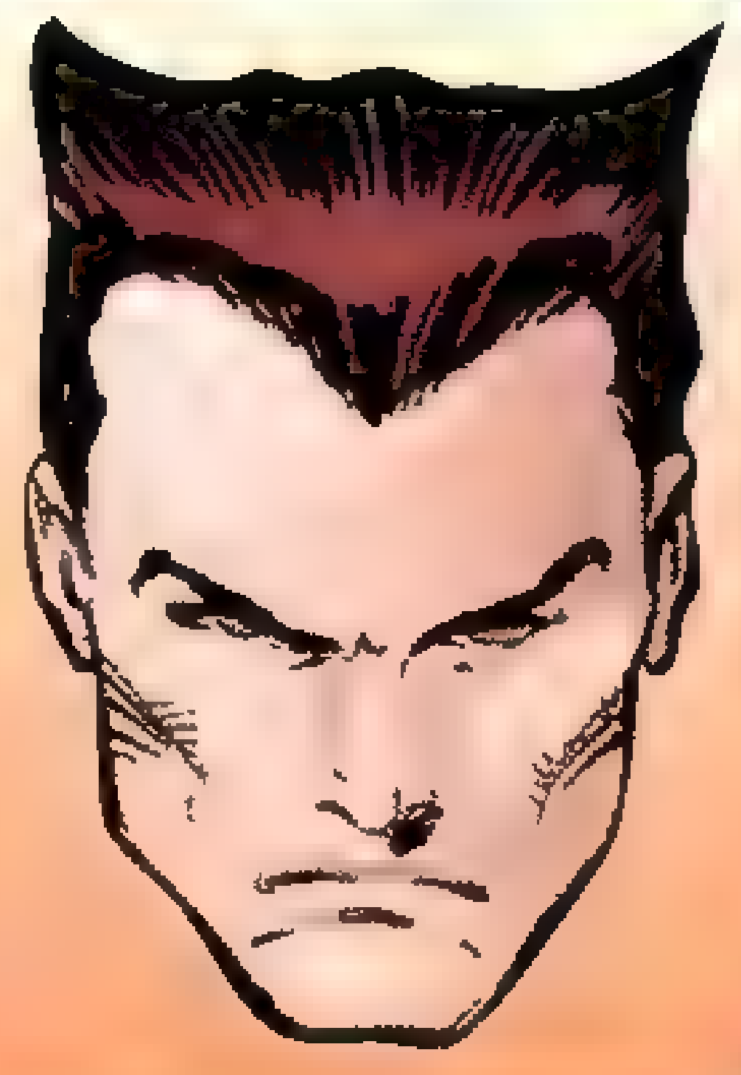
Joined AVENGERS #227, AV 227-238, 240-256, 258-279, 281, 283-288, 291-294, 305, 329-330, 332-333, 345, 347, Annual 12-16, 18-19

Now called **PHOTON**



STARFOX
(Eros)
Twenty-first recruit

Joined AVENGERS #232, (as non-member) AV 231, (as member) AV 232-238, 240-248, 250-261, 301, 305, 311, 314-318, 345, Annuals 12, 14, 19

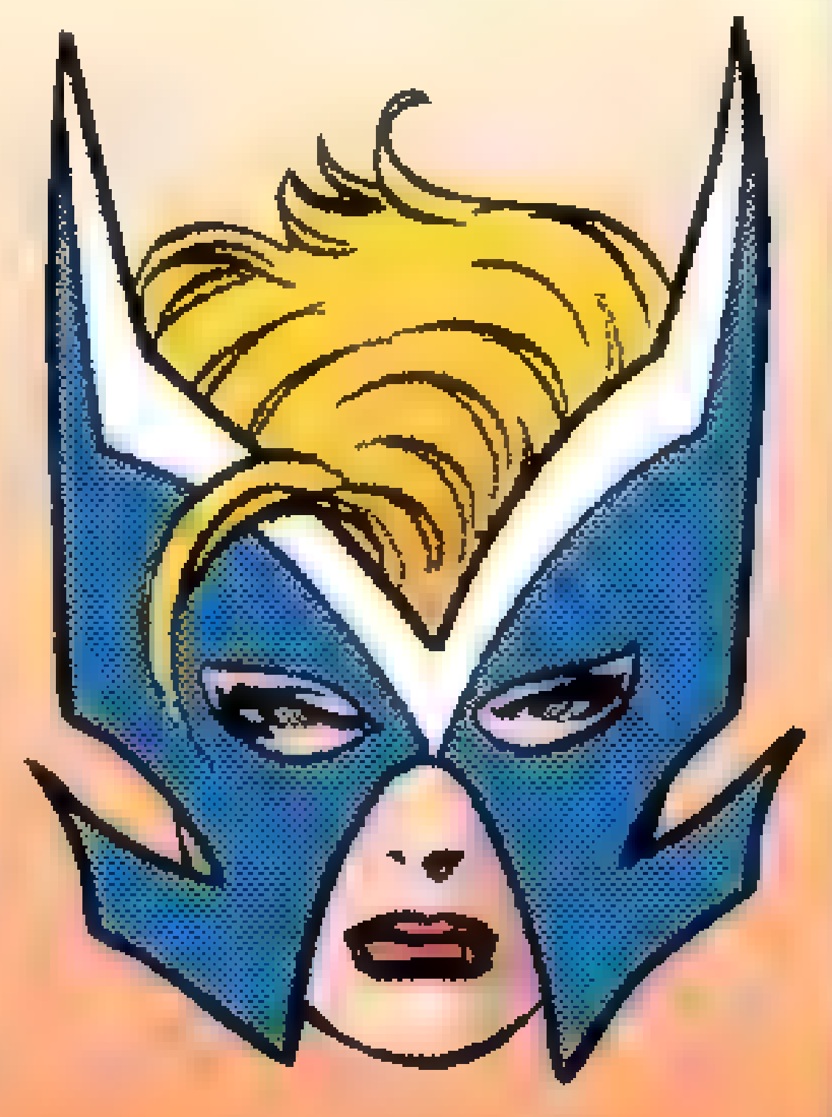


Currently with the FANTASTIC FOUR

MOCKINGBIRD (Roberta "Bobbie" Morse Barton)
West Coast Avenger

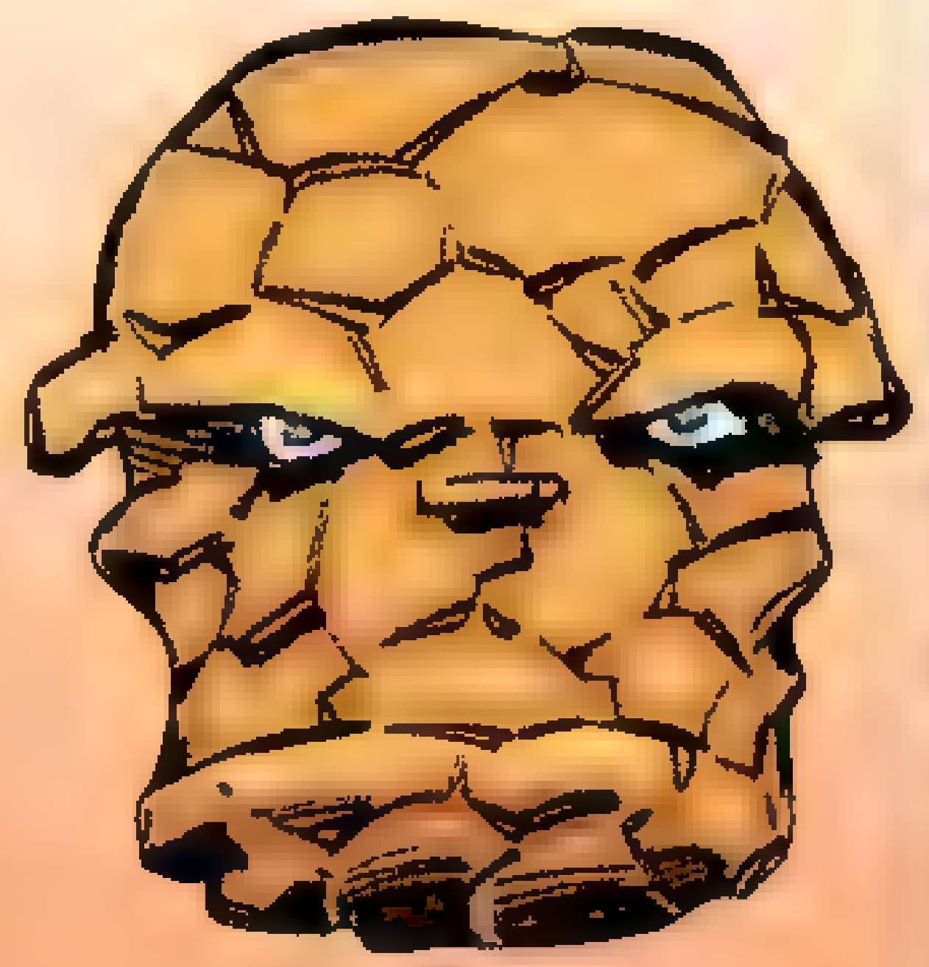
Killed in action in AVENGERS WEST COAST #102

Joined WEST COAST AVENGERS LS #1, (as non-member ally) AV 239, 242-244, 246, (as member) AV 250, 253-254, 305, 309, 313, 329, 332-333, AV Annual 15-16, (as member of Great Lakes Avengers) Annual 19



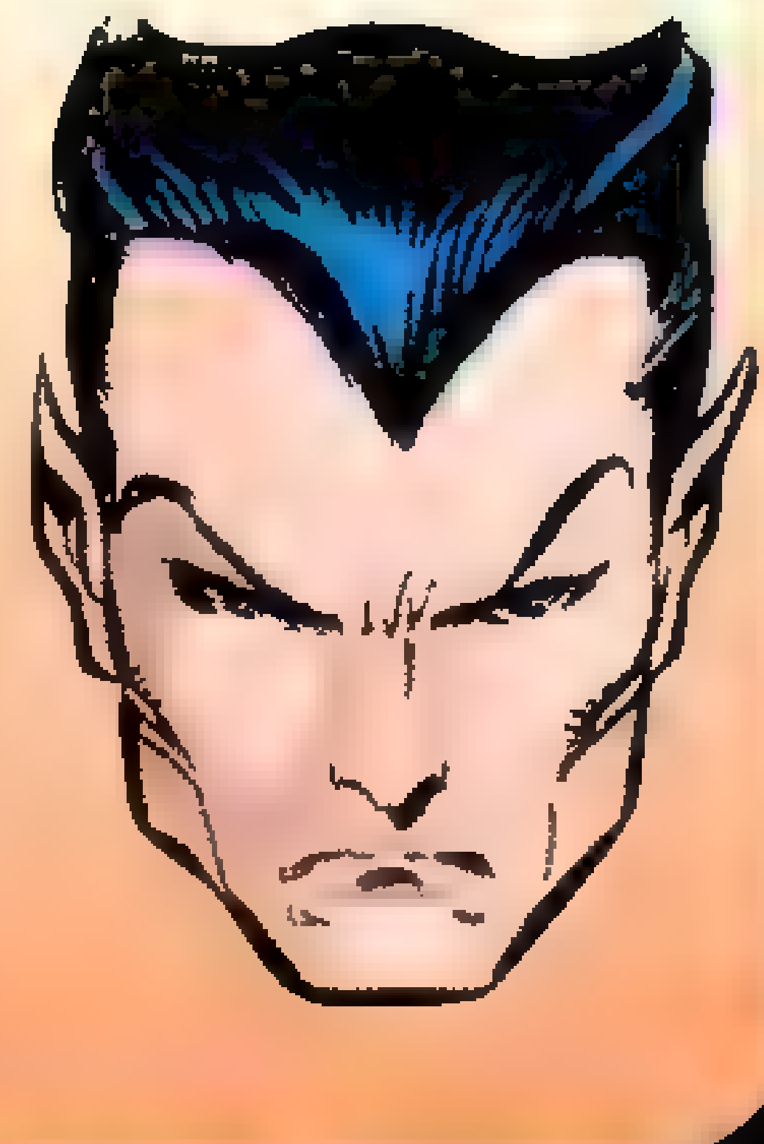
THE THING (Benjamin Grimm)
West Coast Avenger

Active WEST COAST AVENGERS #4, (as FF member) AV 13, 25, 42, 60, 82, 92, 94, 118, 127, 216, 248, 303, (as West Coast Avenger) AV 305, 332-333, AV Annual 18, (as FF member) AV Annual 21



SUB-MARINER (Namor MacKenzie)
Twenty-second recruit

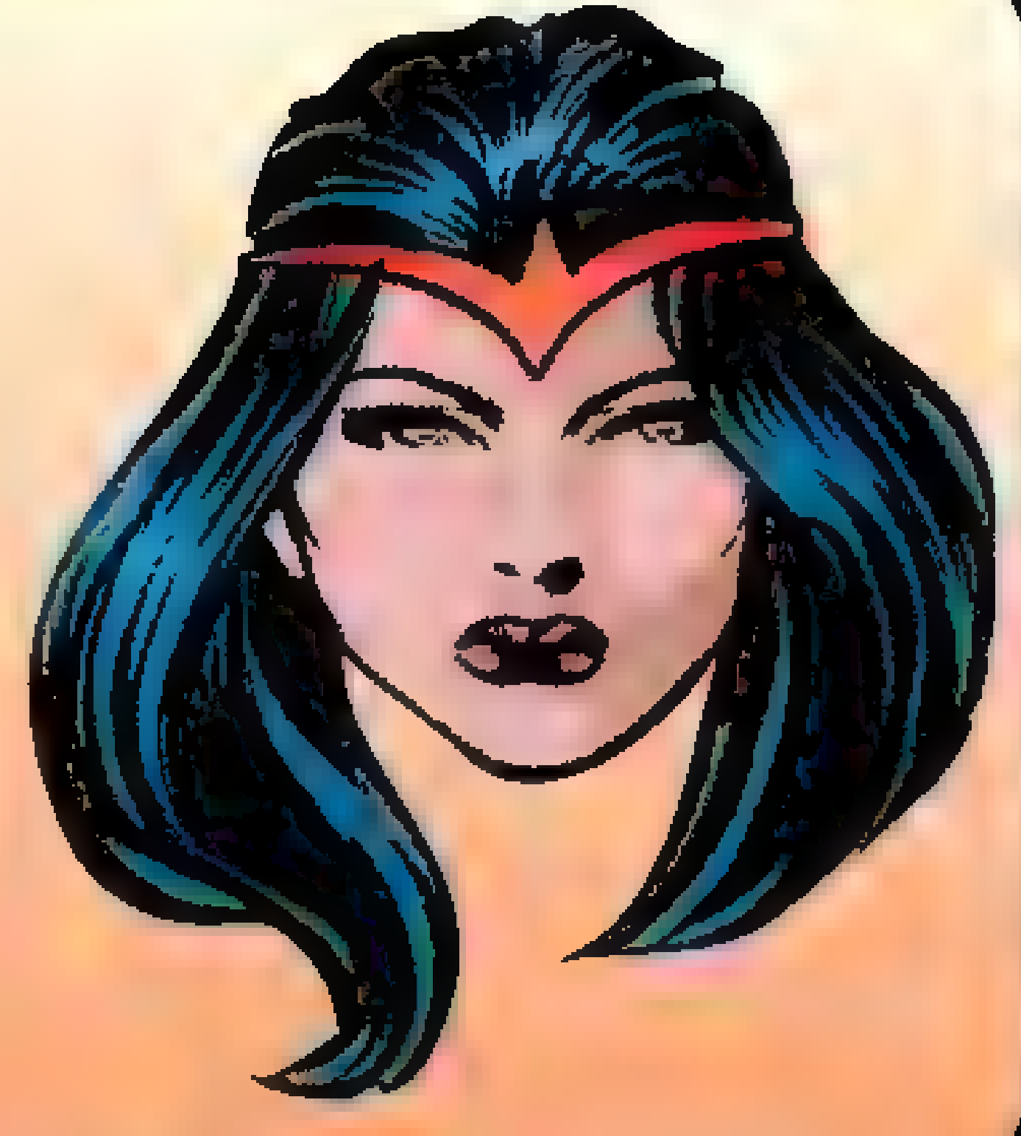
Active AVENGERS #264, (as adversary) AV 3-4, 40, (as non-member ally) AV 16, 26, 155-156, (as member) AV 262-272, 282-293, 305-310, 329, 332-333, Annuals 18-19, (as Defender) AV 117-118



FIREBIRD
(Bonita Juarez)
West Coast Avenger

Active WEST COAST AVENGERS #4, (as West Coast Avenger) AV 305

Also known as **ESPIRITA**



DOCTOR DRUID
(Anthony Ludgate, Anthony Druid)
Twenty third recruit

Joined in AVENGERS #278, (as non-member ally) AV 225-226, 276, (as member) AV 278-279, 281-288, 290-297, Annuals 16, 21

Killed in action in DRUID #22

MOON KNIGHT
(Marc Spector)
West Coast Avenger

Active WEST COAST AVENGERS #21,(as non-member ally) 211, (as non-member ally) Annual 16

Killed in action in MOON KNIGHT #54

MARRINA
Avengers associate

Active AVENGERS #286, (as non-member ally) AV 272, 282, 285-291, (as Leviathan, as adversary) AV 292

Killed in action in AVENGERS

Killed in action in THE CROSSING

YELLOWJACKET II
(Rita DeMara)
Avengers associate

Active AVENGERS ANNUAL #17, (as adversary) AV 264, 271, 273-277, (as non-member ally) AV Annual 17, CROSSING, TIME-SLIDE

Also served in the Guardians of the Galaxy

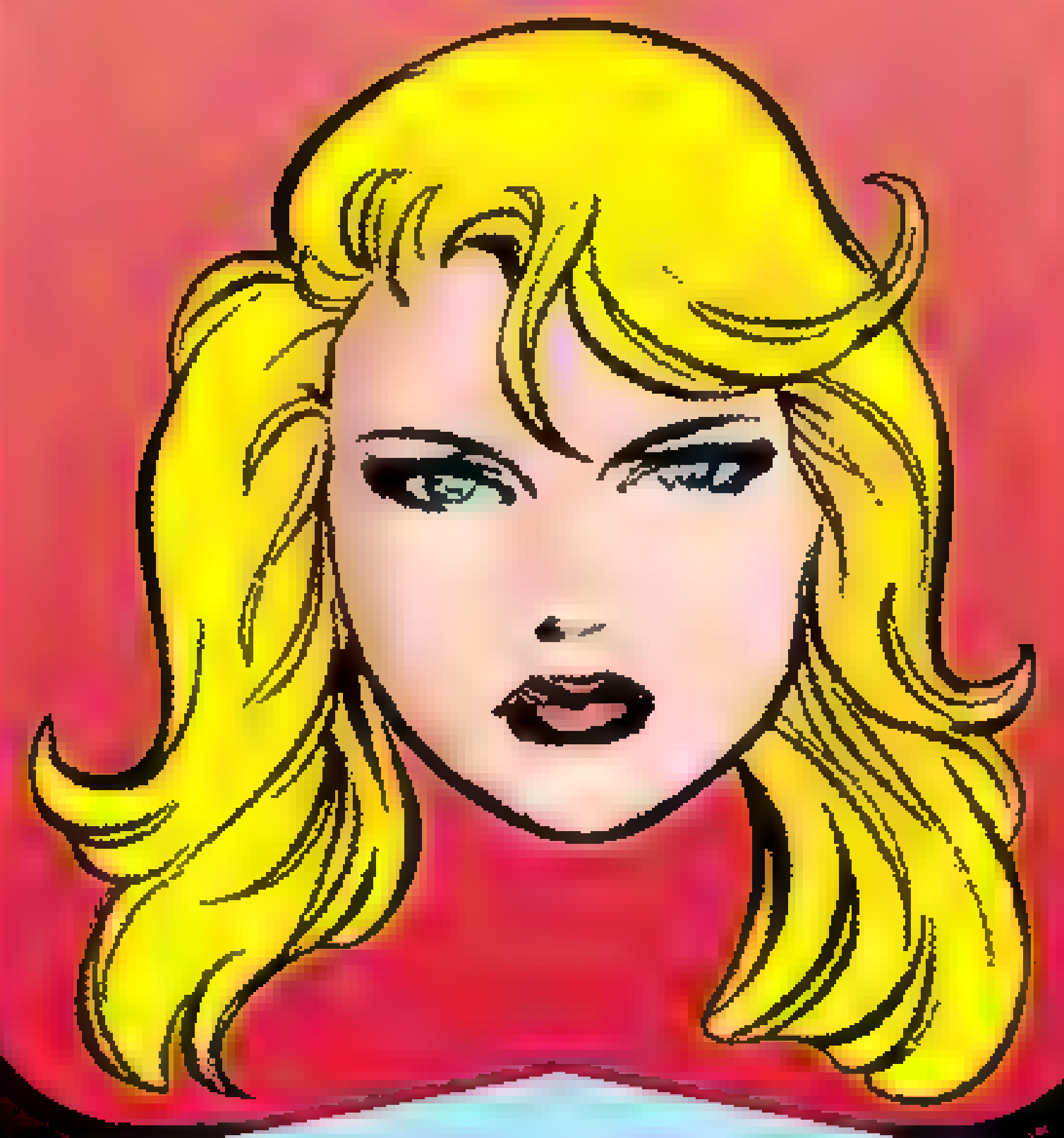
MISTER FANTASTIC
(Reed Richards)
Twenty-fourth recruit

Active AVENGERS #299, (as non-member ally) AV 299, (as member) AV 300-303, 305, 307-308, 327, 332-333, AV Annual 18, (as FF member) AV 12-13, 25, 42, 60, 82, 88, 92, 94, 118, 127, 209, 216, 227, 233, 249, 264, 266, Annual 12, 14, 21

Now with the FANTASTIC FOUR

INVISIBLE WOMAN
(Susan Richards)
Twenty fifth Recruit

Active AVENGERS #299, (as non-member ally) AV 299, (as member) AV 300-303, 305, 307-308, 327, 332-333, Annual 18, (as FF member) AV 12-13, 25, 60, 127, 216, 221, 227, 264, 266, Annual 12, 14, 21



Now with the FANTASTIC FOUR

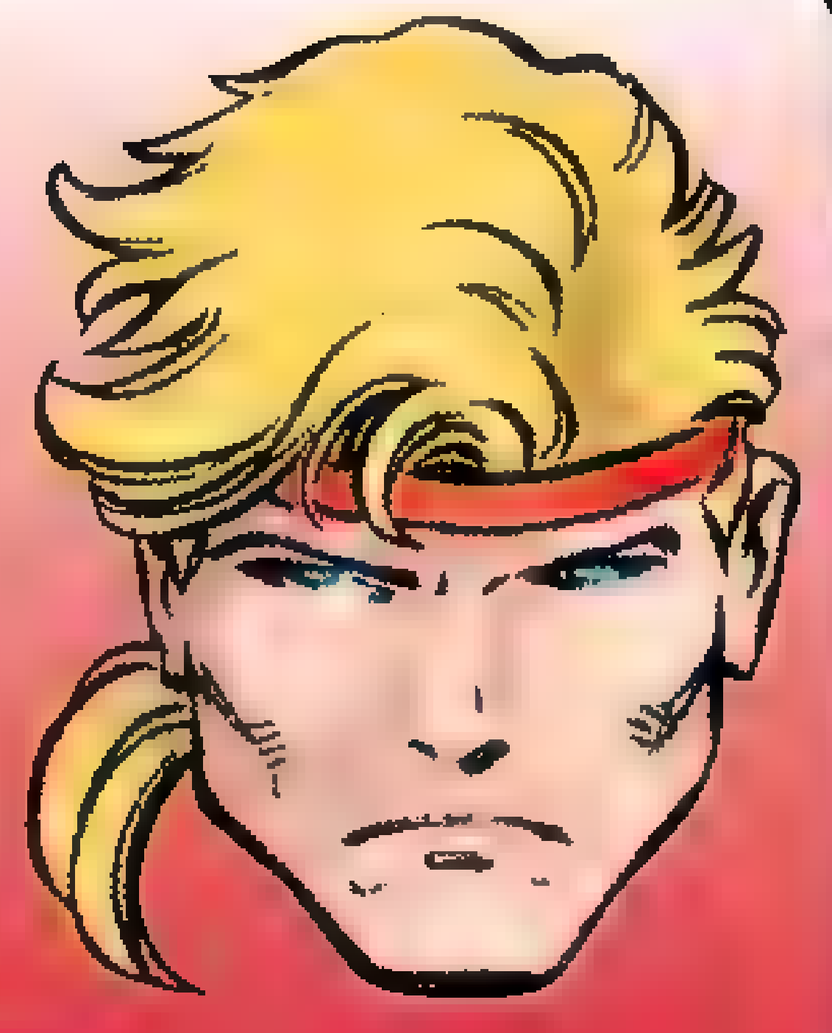
GILGAMESH
(No alias used, "The Forgotten One")
Twenty-sixth recruit

Joined AVENGERS #300, (as non-member) AV 299, (as member) AV 300-310, 345, 391

Died in AVENGERS #391

QUASAR
(Wendell Vaughn)
Twenty-seventh recruit

Joined AVENGERS ANNUAL #18, (as non-member ally) 302-303, (as member) 305-308, 311, 317-325, 329, 331-339, 345, 347, Annuals 18-20



Currently with the STAR MASTERS

SERSI
(No alias used)
Twenty-eighth recruit

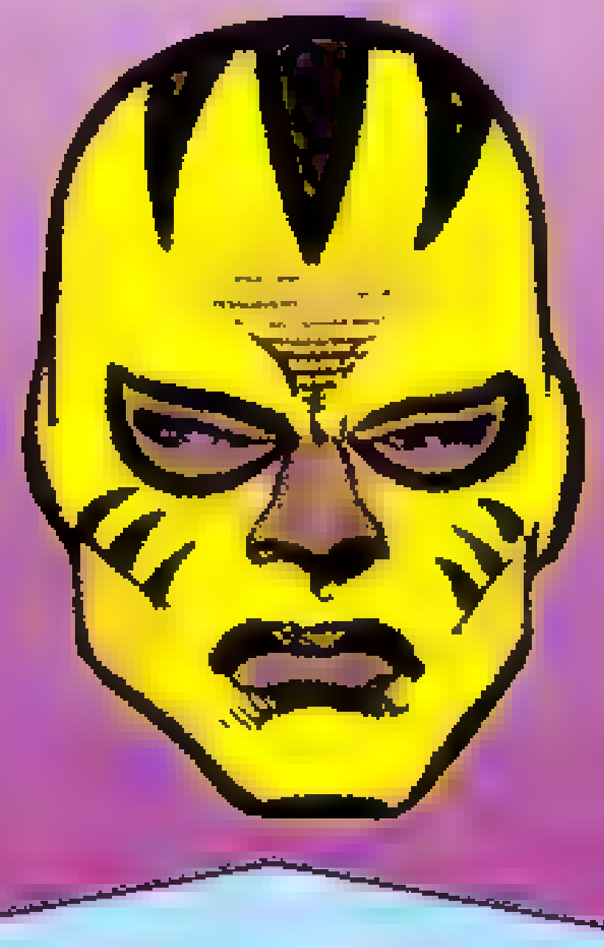
Joined AVENGERS #314, (as non-member ally) 247-248, 308-310, (as member) 314-339, 344-347, 350-366, 368-375, Annuals 18-22

STINGRAY
(Walter Newell)
Reserve Avenger

Joined AVENGERS #319, (as non-member ally) 262, 289-290, (as reservist) 319-324

RAGE (Elvin Daryl Holiday)
Twenty-ninth recruit

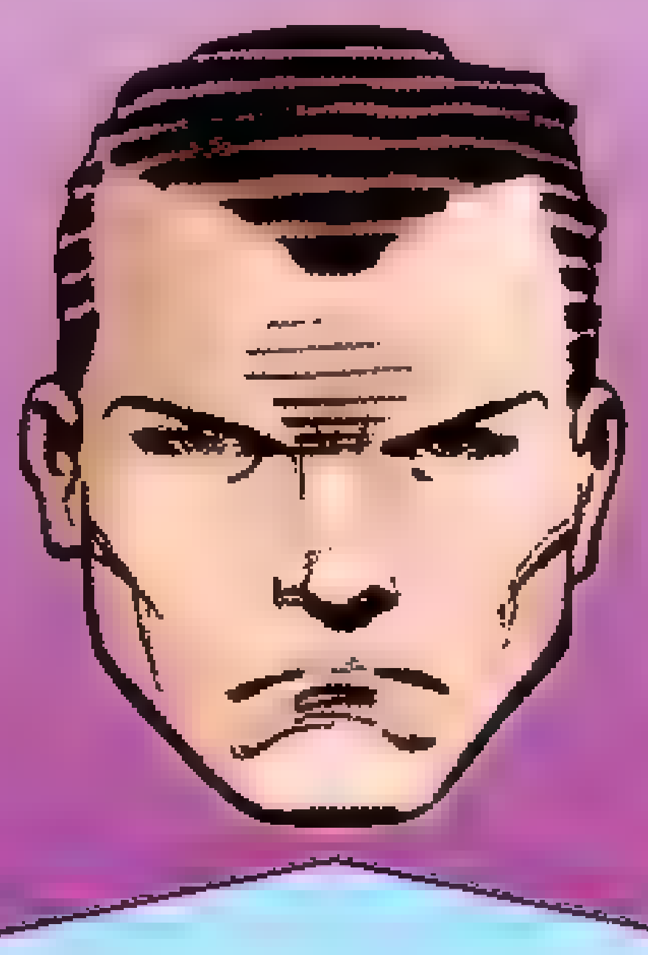
Joined AVENGERS #329, (as non-member ally) 326-328, (as member) 329-339, 341-342, Annual 20



Now with the NEW WARRIORS

SANDMAN
(William Baker, "Flint Marko")
Provisional Avenger

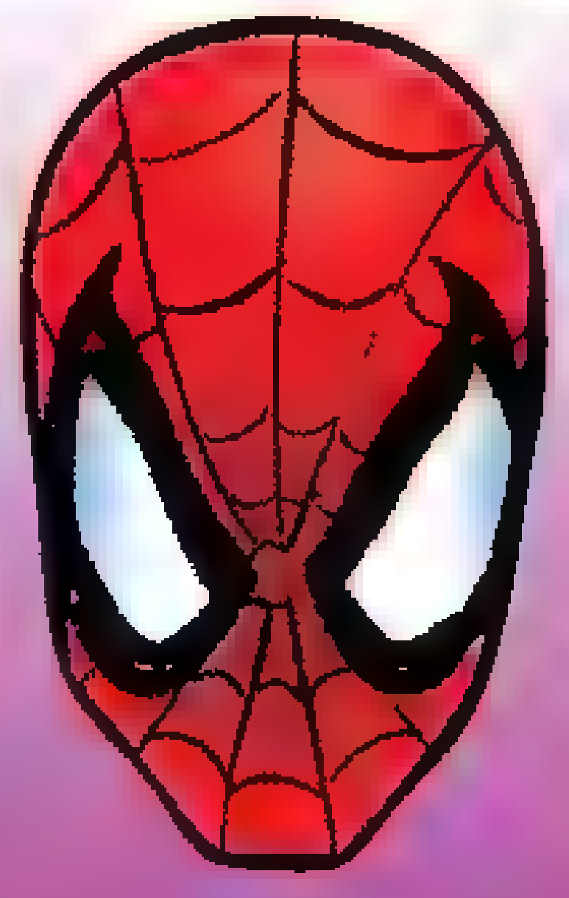
Joined AVENGERS #329, (as provisional member) 329-330, 332-333, Annual 20



Now with the WILD PACK

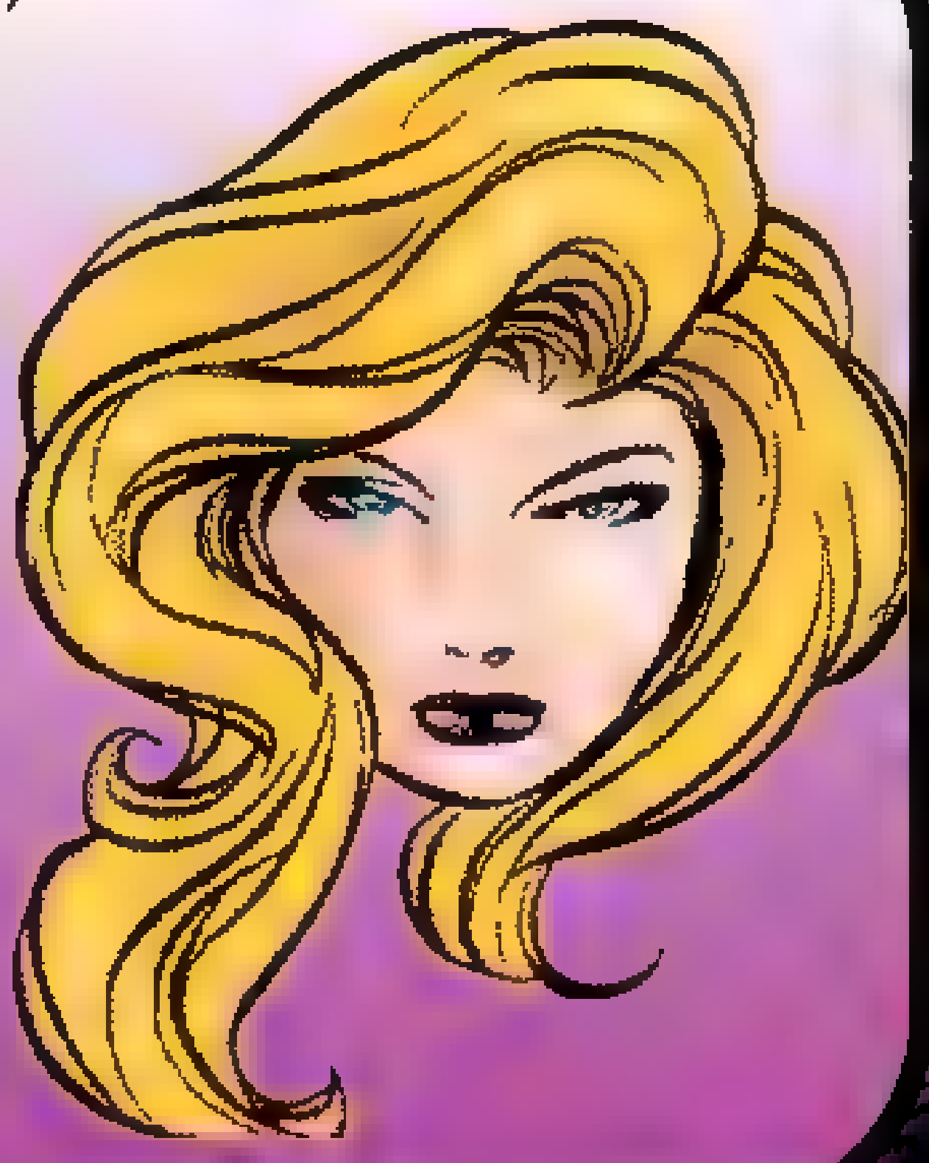
SPIDER-MAN (Peter Parker)
Thirtieth recruit

Joined AVENGERS #329, (as non-member ally) AV 11, 59-60, 85, 118, 196, 235-237, 258, 314-318, (as Peter Parker, non-member) AV 82, 168, 298, (as member) AV 329-330, 333



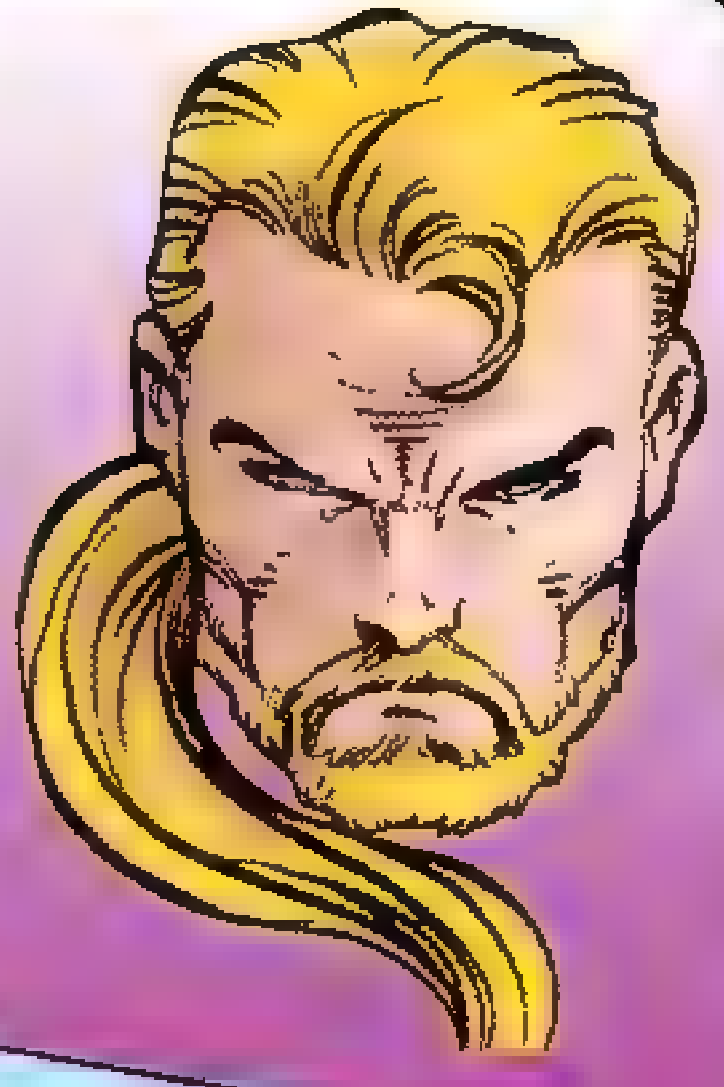
CRYSTAL (Crystalia Maximoff)
Thirty-first recruit

Joined AVENGERS #337, (as non-member ally) AV 60, 110, 127, 170, 188, 234, 243, 334, 336, Annual 12, (as member) AV 337-339, 343-355, 357-376, 378-379, 381-395, 398, 400, AV Annuals 21-23, CROSSING



THUNDERSTRIKE
also known as **THOR II**
(Eric Masterson)
Thirty-second recruit

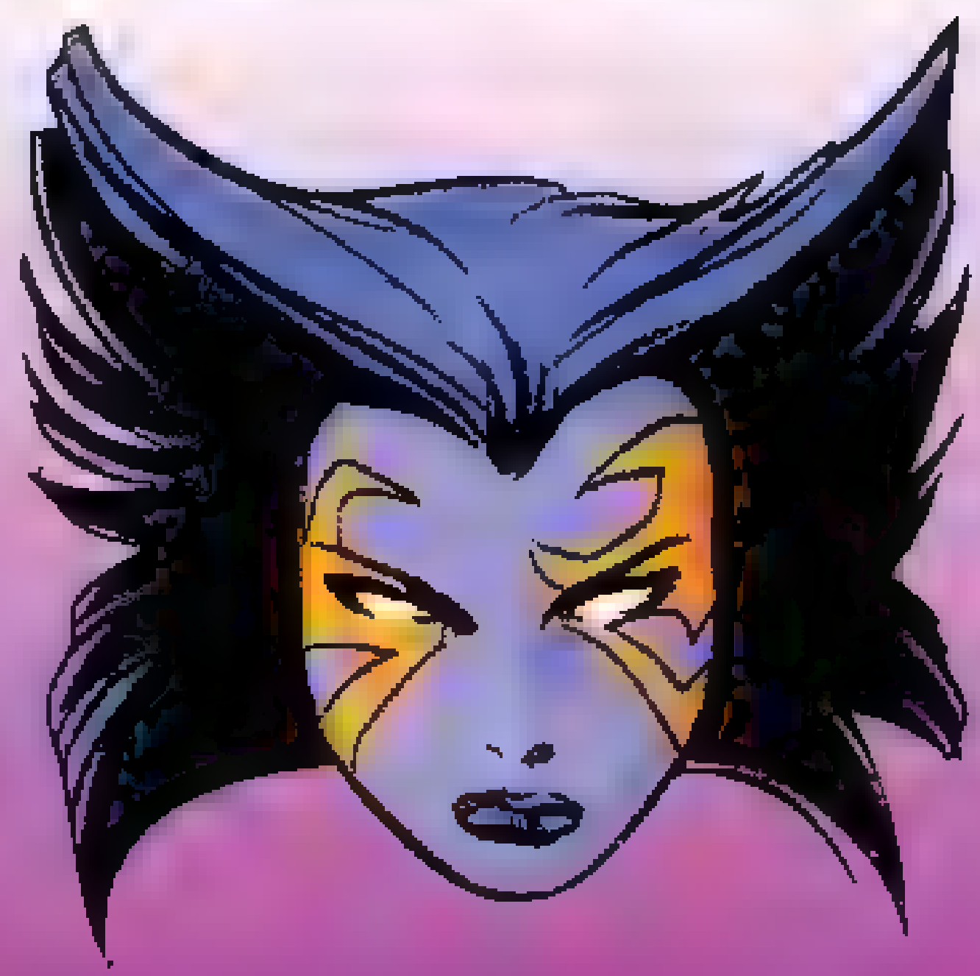
joined AVENGERS #343 (as Thor II) 343-345, 347, 349-351, 355-356, Annual 21, (as Thunderstrike) 374-375, 383, Annual 23



Killed in action in THUNDERSTRIKE #24

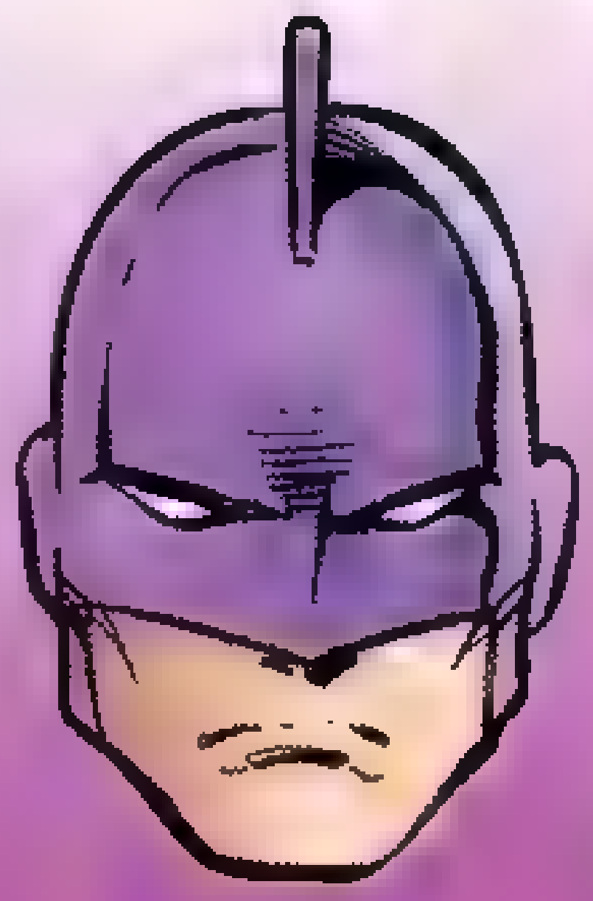
DEATHCRY
(No alias used)
Avengers associate

Active AVENGERS #363, (as non-member ally) 363-365, 367, 372, 378-379, 383-386, 389-392, 398-399, CROSSING



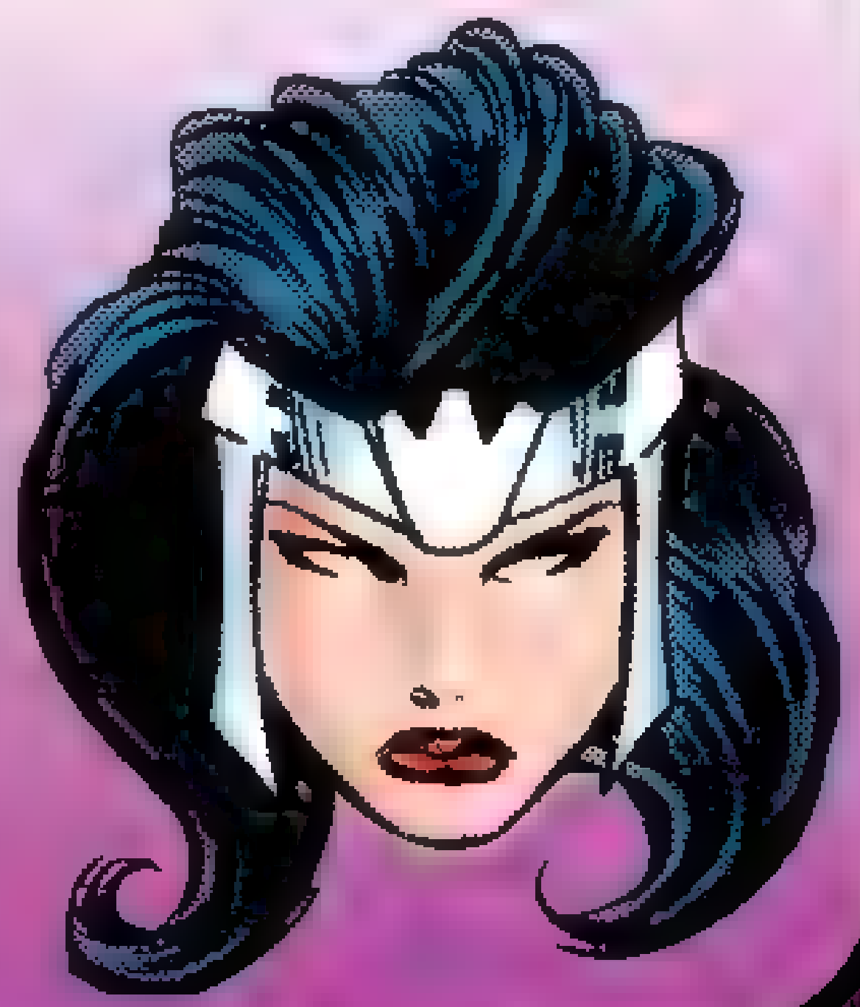
SWORDSMAN II
(Philip Jarvert)
Avengers associate

Active AVENGERS #357, (as adversary) 343-344, 356, (as non-member ally) 357-358, 360, 362-363, 367, 372, 378-379, 390-394, 397



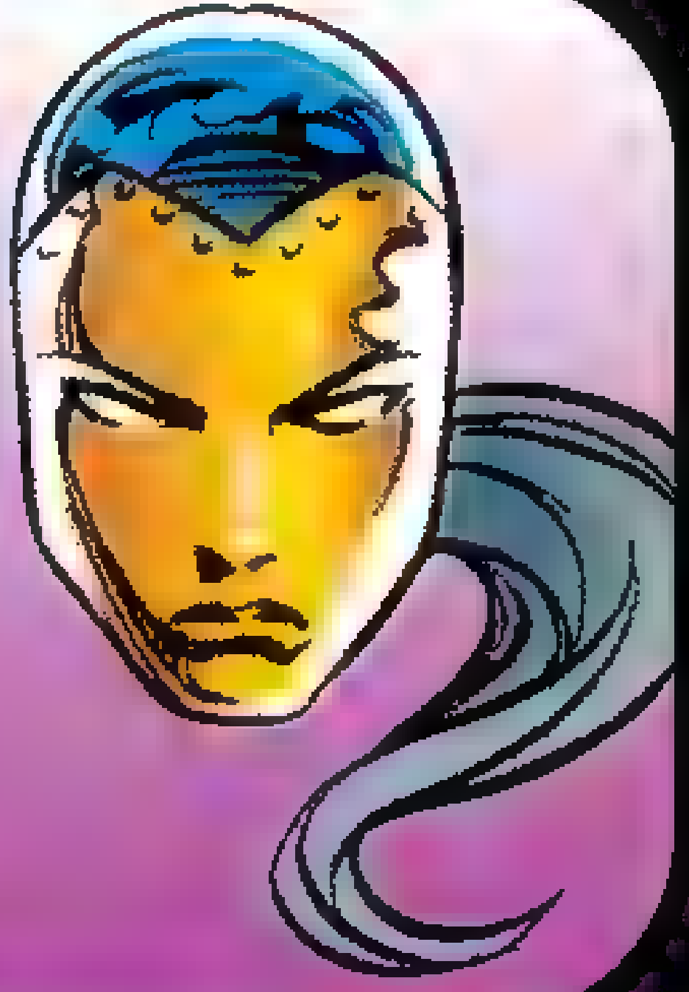
MAGDALENE (Full name classified)
Avengers associate

Active AVENGERS #363, (as adversary) 343-344, 348, 355-356, 358-360, (as ally) 363-364, 367, 372, 378-379, 390-391



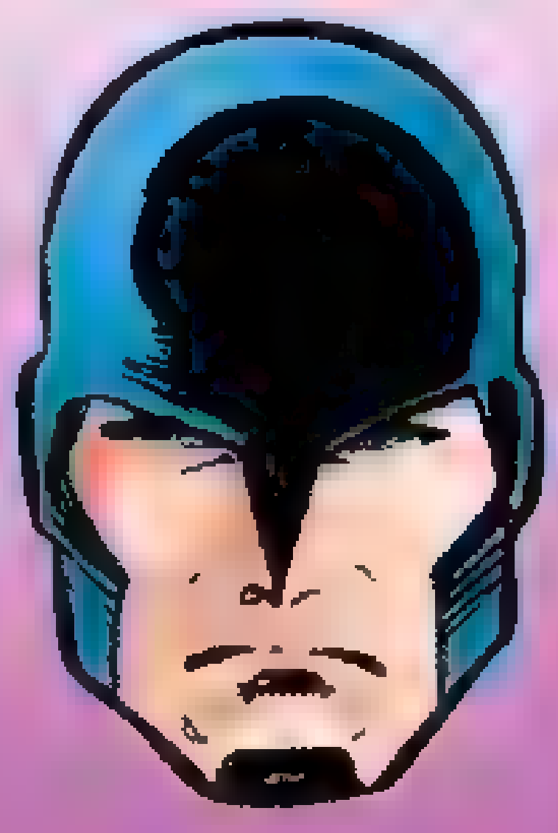
MASQUE
(Real name classified)
Avengers associate

Active AVENGERS #393, AV 393-395, 397-399



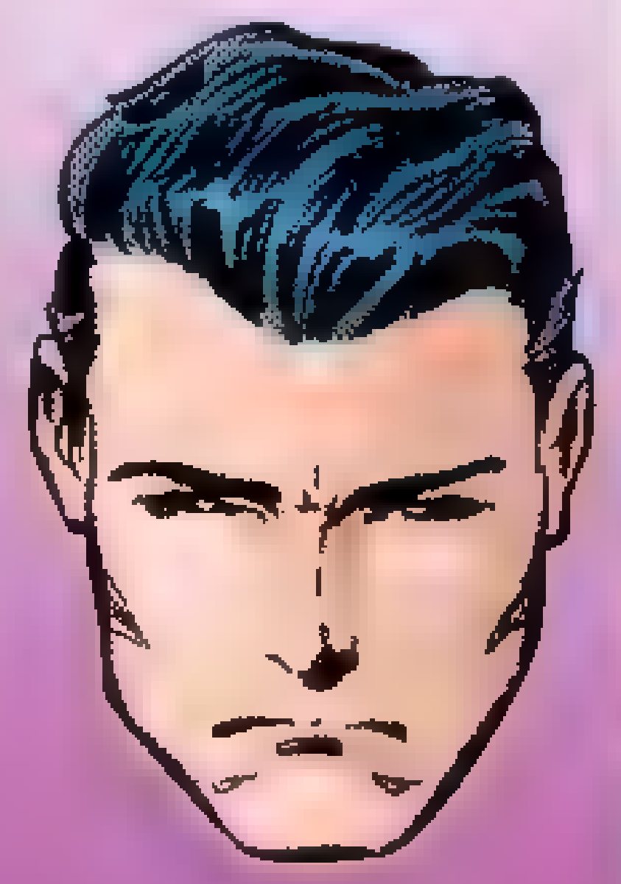
USAGENT
(John Walker, "Jack Daniels')
West Coast Avenger

Joined AVENGERS WEST COAST #44, (as West Coast Avenger) AV 329, 333, 345, 368-369



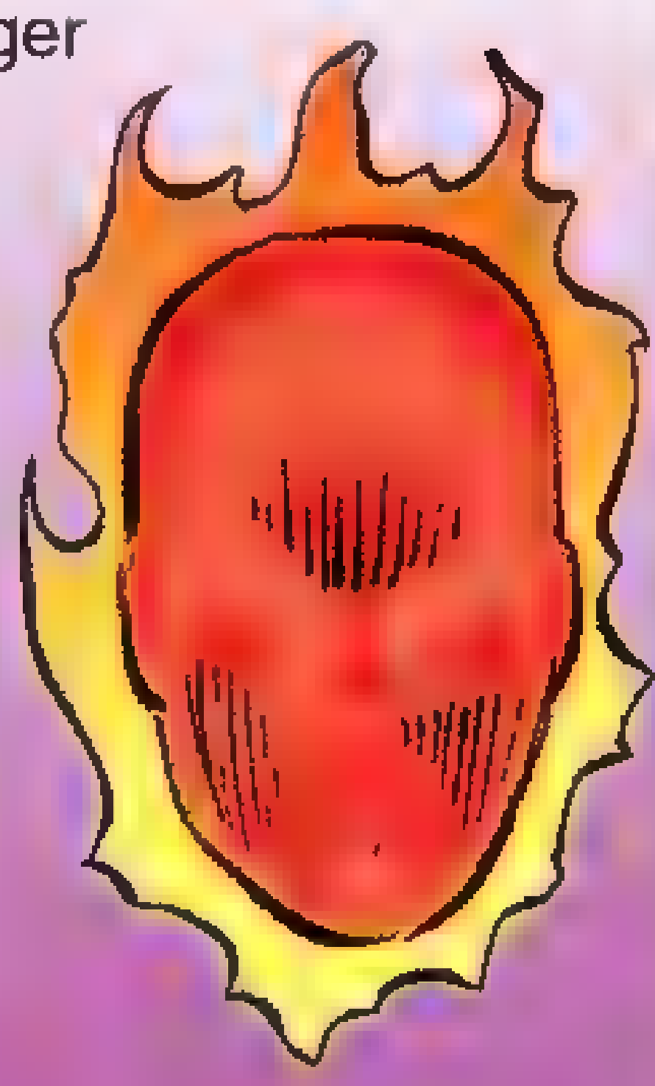
LIVING LIGHTNING
(Miguel Santos)
West Coast Avenger

Joined AVENGERS WEST COAST #74, (as West Coast Avenger) AV 345



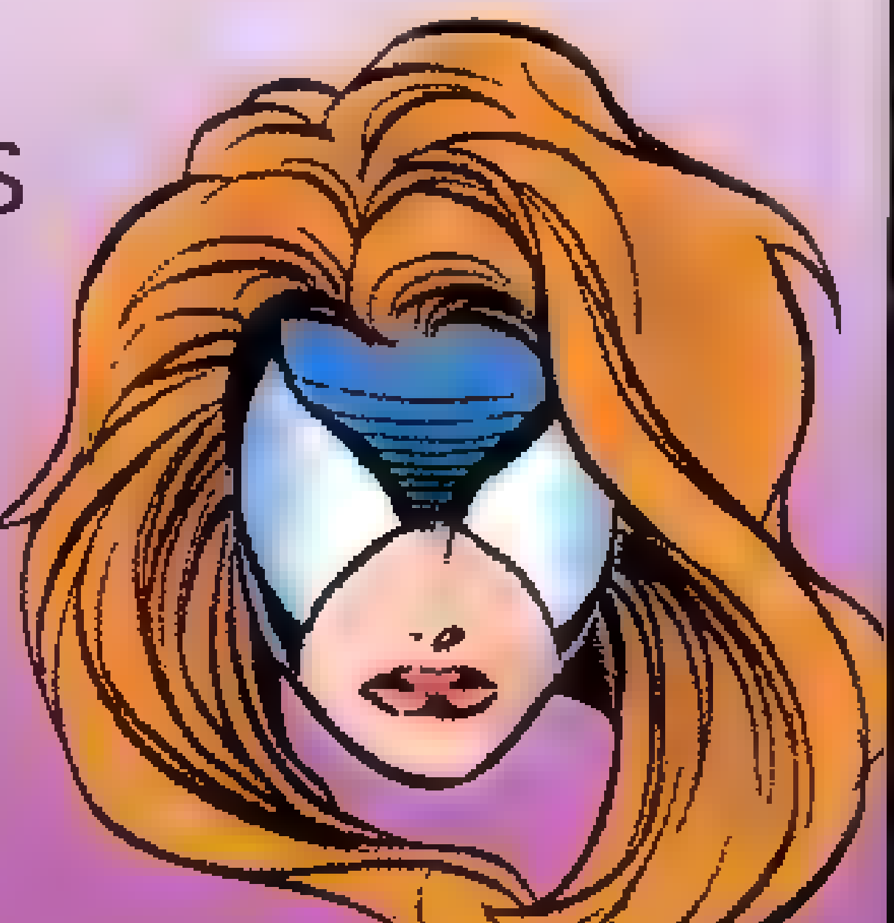
HUMAN TORCH
(Jim Hammond)
West Coast Avenger

Joined AVENGERS WEST COAST #50, (as West Coast Avenger) AV Annuals 18-19



SPIDER-WOMAN II
(Julia Carpenter)
West Coast Avenger

Joined AVENGERS WEST COAST #74, (as West Coast Avenger) AV 345, 368



ASSEMBLY LINE

MARK GRUENWALD
EDITOR
NANCY POLETTI
ASSISSTANT
BOB HARRAS
CHIEF
c/o Marvel Comics
387 park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016
ADDRESSES WITHHELD BY REQUEST

Welcome to our gala 400th issue of THE AVENGERS! We've pulled out all stops to make this issue not only a celebration of all the great things in the Avengers' past, but also a self-contained single issue story as a break from all the multi-part mania of recent days. I feel very fortunate. I got to edit issue #300 of this title, then got sidetracked into other duties, but managed to get my editorial reins reinstated just in time to edit #400! As a rabid AVENGERS fan since the very beginning, I feel very proud and honored to be here on this auspicious anniversary. As for the future... the next few months are going to take this title where no Marvel title's ever gone before. Be here and keep avenging!

– Mark Gruenwald

Dear Avengers,

Having just finished issue #395, I want to commend you on a fine storyline; never in all my years of following the Assemblers have I so eagerly awaited each issue, to try and piece together your great puzzle. For one who grew up reading Englehart's Avengers, seeing the Cotati, Libra, Mantis, Kang – even hearing the names "Krull" and "Pama" brought back wonderful memories. With the heavy emphasis on members in the AVENGERS first one hundred issues (including T'Challa's appearance and the upcoming HULK crossover), you are truly harkening back to the glory days and the roots of this team.

I will faithfully watch for future developments and answers. When Mantis fights the Vision, she refers to "others you have yet to even recognize"; can Tobias and Malachi be the twins of Wanda and the Vision? The eyebeams they've earlier exhibited would lend credence to this. Also, Mantis says the Vision was wounded through one he cares for; does she refer to Wanda's devastation when the Vision lost his emotions in WEST COAST AVENGERS #46?

Thanks for entertaining an old fan!

Chris A. Woo
12265 Crisscross Lane
San Diego, CA 92129

Thanks for being entertained, Chris! The mystery behind Tobias and Malachi remains just that – a mystery – and will no doubt remain so until they and the Avengers cross swords once more. We'll tell you this much: their hatred for the Avengers is a *family* affair...

To the Editor:

I'll have to admit, I'm disappointed that this *Crossing* business was simply a means to introduce a "Young Tony Stark – The Adventures of Iron Man When He Was a Boy." Shades of BRAND ECHH. The market must be pretty tough indeed to impel Marvel to that kind of creative flailing. Oh, well, I'll continue to read the AVENGERS.

Of course, there are still a number of *Crossing*-related issues that have yet to be resolved. For instance, why, to paraphrase Hank in TIMESLIDE, did a Watcher who didn't even know the Avengers provide them with an ersatz mansion, complete with temporal door? And what about the "future' glimpsed in TIMESLIDE, in which the Avengers are outlaws?

But the most important thing left unexplained is exactly when and how Kang turned Stark. Did it start back in issue #8, the first meeting between the Avengers and Kang? Has Stark – despite his thirty-year history of heroism – always been, at bottom, a mole of Kang's?

More importantly, precisely *how* was the corruption of Stark accomplished? What did Kang offer that could turn Iron Man, one of the founding heroes of the Marvel Universe, into a common killer? This point was not made clear in any of the *Crossing* books and, frankly, the whys and wherefores – the exact reasons for Stark's betrayal – are the fundamental elements needed to make any sense of the whole *Crossing* storyline. So, please,... take a moment to provide this key piece of information.

J. Motley
(Address withheld by request)

You've raised some important questions there, J., and we're going to try and clear them up for you. (By the way, we can't print letters without names, but we thought your letter contained some pretty serious points, so we wanted to get it in here.)

For starters, the introduction of young Tony was far from the point of *The Crossing.* While we knew that that was going to be one of our end-points, it wasn't the original idea from which *The Crossing* storyline sprang – the origin of the story was the

question of what lay behind the trans-temporal door. We thought turning one of the founding members of the Avengers inside-out would be really neat, and with Thor and Cap going through some pretty thorough changes in their books during the time *The Crossing* was beginning, Iron Man became the logical choice for that "new and improved" treatment.

Concerning the door, and the mansion it resides in, we believe that Kang was responsible for placing this alternate-reality mansion into our reality in AVENGERS #375, rather than Ute, the alternate reality Watcher. This was just another step in his master plan which came to fruition in *The Crossing.* If you go back and look at that issue, the narrator suggests that the return of the mansion (rather than the restoration of the Avengers' headquarters which was destroyed the issue before) might not be a mistake on Ute's part. In hindsight, the narrator was right. As for the "future" glimpse of the Avengers, that future was averted when Tony Stark regained his consciousness long enough to help defeat Kang and company.

We don't know when exactly Kang first took control of Tony, through we do know it occurred *after* Kang and Tony first met. Kang's subversion of Tony was done secretly, and on an unconscious level, so Tony was never really an active "mole" for Kang – willing or otherwise.

Dear Avengers,

The death of Tony Stark is like an open wound and I mourn for him as I would a best friend. Of this younger, cleaner Stark, I wonder, will he be a student where he was previously a teacher, or a follower in industry instead of a leader? Where he was once a best friend or lover, will he now be a mere acquaintance? Is he sentenced to live a future that has already occurred or pay the price for a past not yet lived? When I think of past events such as the damaged heart, the battle with alcoholism, the theft of his company, his paralysis and resurrection from cryogenic freeze, I fear that all of this, all that Tony Stark knew, all that he was, is lost.

Is it total insanity or pure ingenuity that would take a founding member of the Avengers and a cornerstone of the Marvel Universe, turn him into a murderer and kill him at the pinnacle of his popularity? Only time will tell.

Regardless of the future, you should all be proud of creating what will surely be remembered as a turning point in the Marvel Universe for years to come. As a final requiem for the rebirth of a hero and the passing of a legend I can only quote the obvious: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

The future has truly just begun!

Gregory Varesco
167 Seaward Way
Avon Lake, OH 44012

Like you, Gregory, we also mourn for our fallen friend. *The Crossing* was a labor of love for all involved, and the decision to end the life of "our" Tony Stark was not a light one.

Don't forget that "young" Tony is from a different timeline. Therefore, the life that "our" Tony Stark lived is in no way invalidated. Rather, the arrival of "young" Tony suggests that the saga of Tony Stark will continue, and we've simply opened the next chapter.

Dear Assemblers,

Question: If the 19-year-old Tony Stark stays in this time, who is ongoing to do all the things he did?

I mean, if there was a little old lady trapped under a building, and Iron Man pulled her out, and Tony's here, isn't she toast?

Who was there to give Scott Lang a job when he got out of prison?

Who gave the Avengers the mansion?

How would the Avengers have any memories of him?

When Professor Xavier's son jaunted back into time and killed his dad, the whole world went looney. Wouldn't the same thing happen now?

Don't get me wrong. I love the young Tony. I want to keep him. I think it'll be fun, but what are you going to do about the time continuity problem?

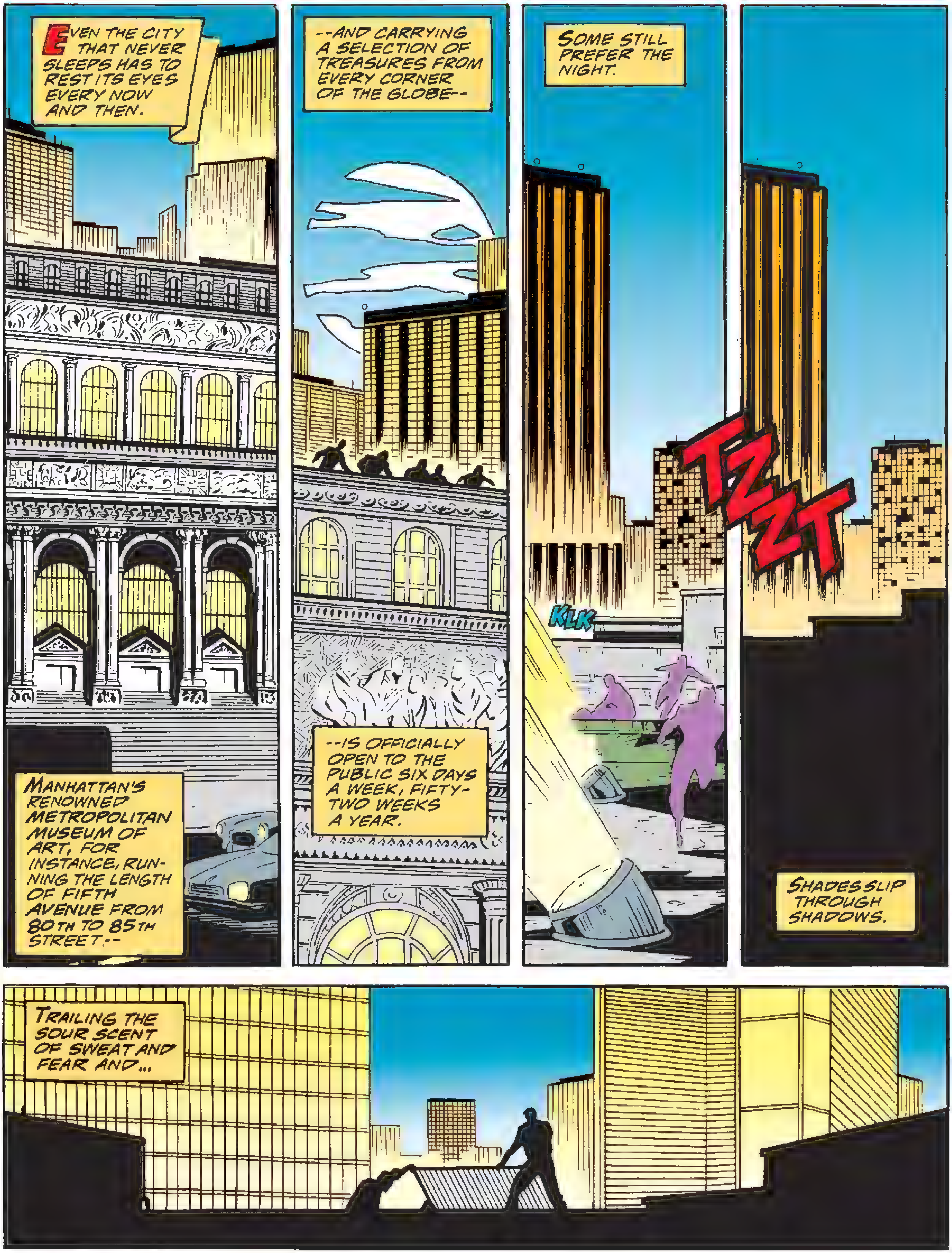
Angie Saunders
110 Bauer Ct. E-14
Crestline, OH 44827

Not to worry, Angie! We've got it all figured out. No one is more aware than the Avengers of the dangers inherent in contaminating or changing the timestream. If Tony Stark were removed from the past and brought to the present, the effects would be devastating (and, no doubt, the subject of many an issue of WHAT IF?). When the Avengers traveled through the trans-temporal door, they were transported both back and *sideways* in time to an alternate reality. Since no one but Kang knows when he began corrupting Tony Stark, the Avengers felt it wise to go back in time to a point *before* Tony became Iron Man and (presumably) first met Kang. Since they took a Tony from another timeline, past events in our timeline was consequently unchanged.

NEXT ISSUE: MIKE DEODATO returns to the penciling helm to help Mark Waid and Tom Palmer spin a little tale where the Avengers go after a fellow by the name of... MAGNETO!

MARVEL COMICS
IRON MAN
JUN. '96
329
THE INVINCIBLE
IRON MAN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
YOUNG TONY STARK™ ON
A DATE WITH
DISASTER!

A TEENAGER REBORN INTO A MAN'S WORLD — IRON MAN'S WORLD — YOUNG *TONY STARK* BOLDLY FACES HIS UNCERTAIN *FUTURE* ONE STEP AT A TIME. WITH HEART DAMAGED AND SOUL SHAKEN BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF TOMORROW'S DARK POSSIBILITIES, TONY'S GREATEST ASSET — AND ONLY HOPE — REMAINS HIS *BRILLIANT MIND*. . .STAN LEE PRESENTS. . .IRON MAN!


EVEN THE CITY THAT NEVER SLEEPS HAS TO REST ITS EYES EVERY NOW AND THEN.
MANHATTAN'S RENOWNED METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, FOR INSTANCE, RUNNING THE LENGTH OF FIFTH AVENUE FROM 80TH TO 85TH STREET--
--AND CARRYING A SELECTION OF TREASURES FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE GLOBE--
--IS OFFICIALLY OPEN TO THE PUBLIC SIX DAYS A WEEK, FIFTY-TWO WEEKS A YEAR.
SOME STILL PREFER THE NIGHT.
KLK
TZZT
SHADES SLIP THROUGH SHADOWS.
TRAILING THE SOUR SCENT OF SWEAT AND FEAR AND...

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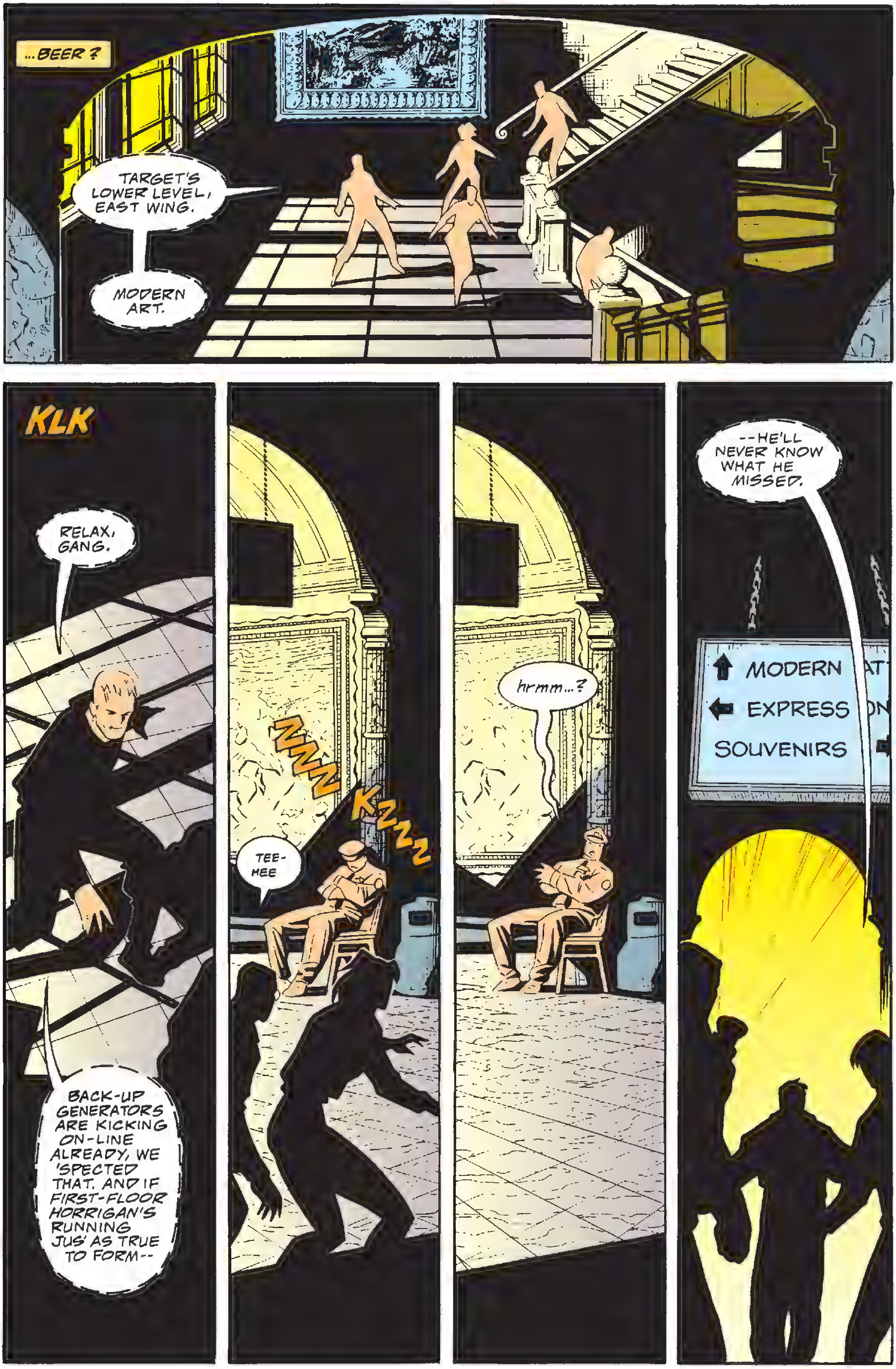
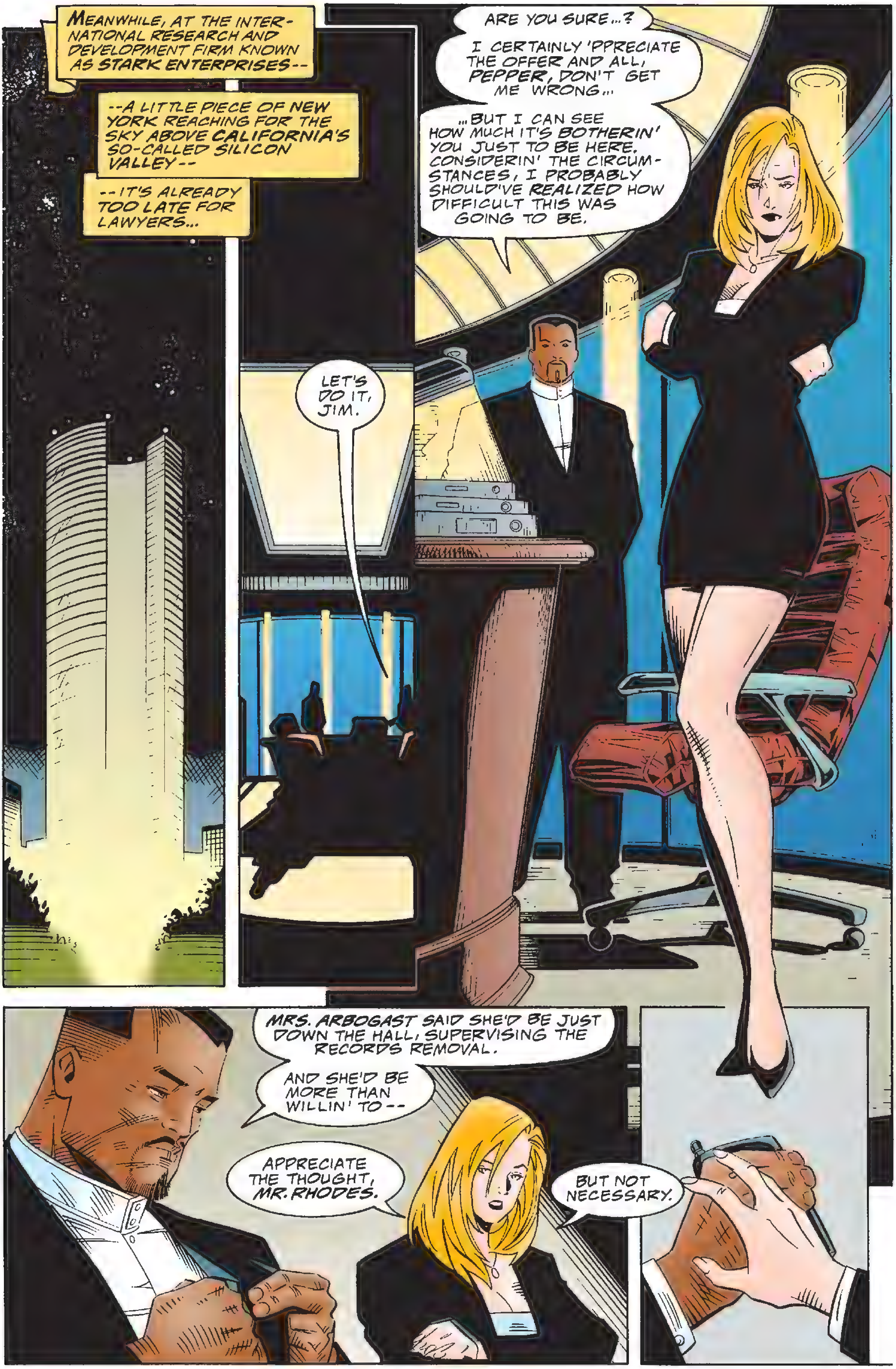
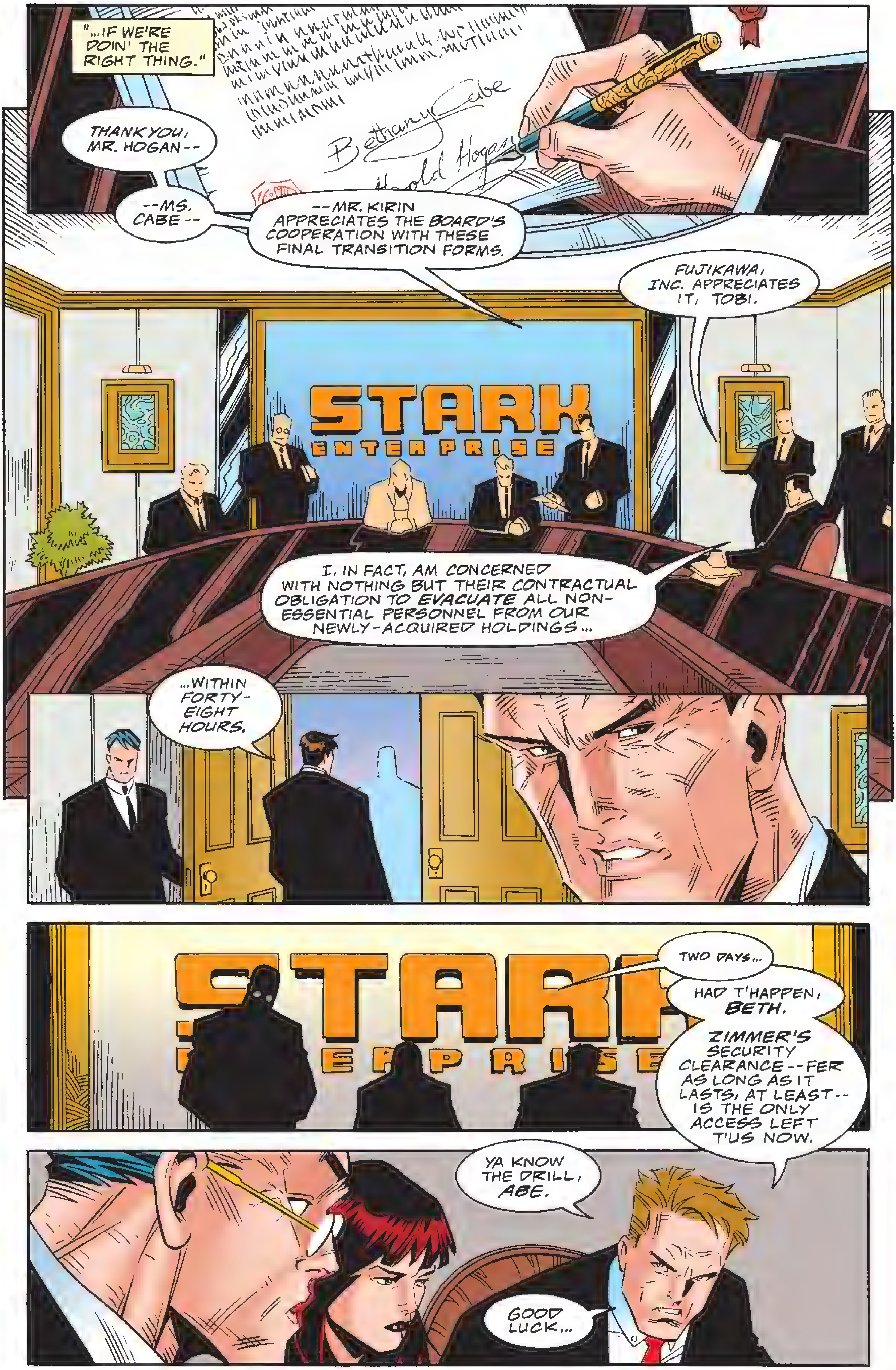

...BEER ?
TARGET'S LOWER LEVEL, EAST WING.
MODERN ART.
KLK
RELAX, GANG.
BACK-UP GENERATORS ARE KICKING ON-LINE ALREADY, WE 'SPECTED THAT. AND IF FIRST-FLOOR HORRIGAN'S RUNNING JUS' AS TRUE TO FORM--
ZZZ
KZZZZ
TEE-HEE
hrmm...?
--HE'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT HE MISSED.
MODERN AT
EXPRESS ON
SOUVENIRS

LOOKS RIGHT T'ME.
DEGANN...?
SIZE IS SPOT ON, BENJ, SURE...
...BUT THE KID WOULD WANT T'BE REAL CAREFUL HANDLIN' A PIECE O' THAT WORTH.
THIS IS TOO EASY, GUYS.
NO ONE'S EVER PENETRATED THIS DEEP BEFORE, NEVER IN THE WHOLE HISTORY O' --
KTHUN-
..OOGA OOGA OOGA!
UH-OH.
STREET-SIDE EMERGENCY EXITS, JUST WHERE I SHOWED Y' ON THE WAY IN ...
...SCATTER!
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, PUNK-- HOLD IT, HOLD IT--

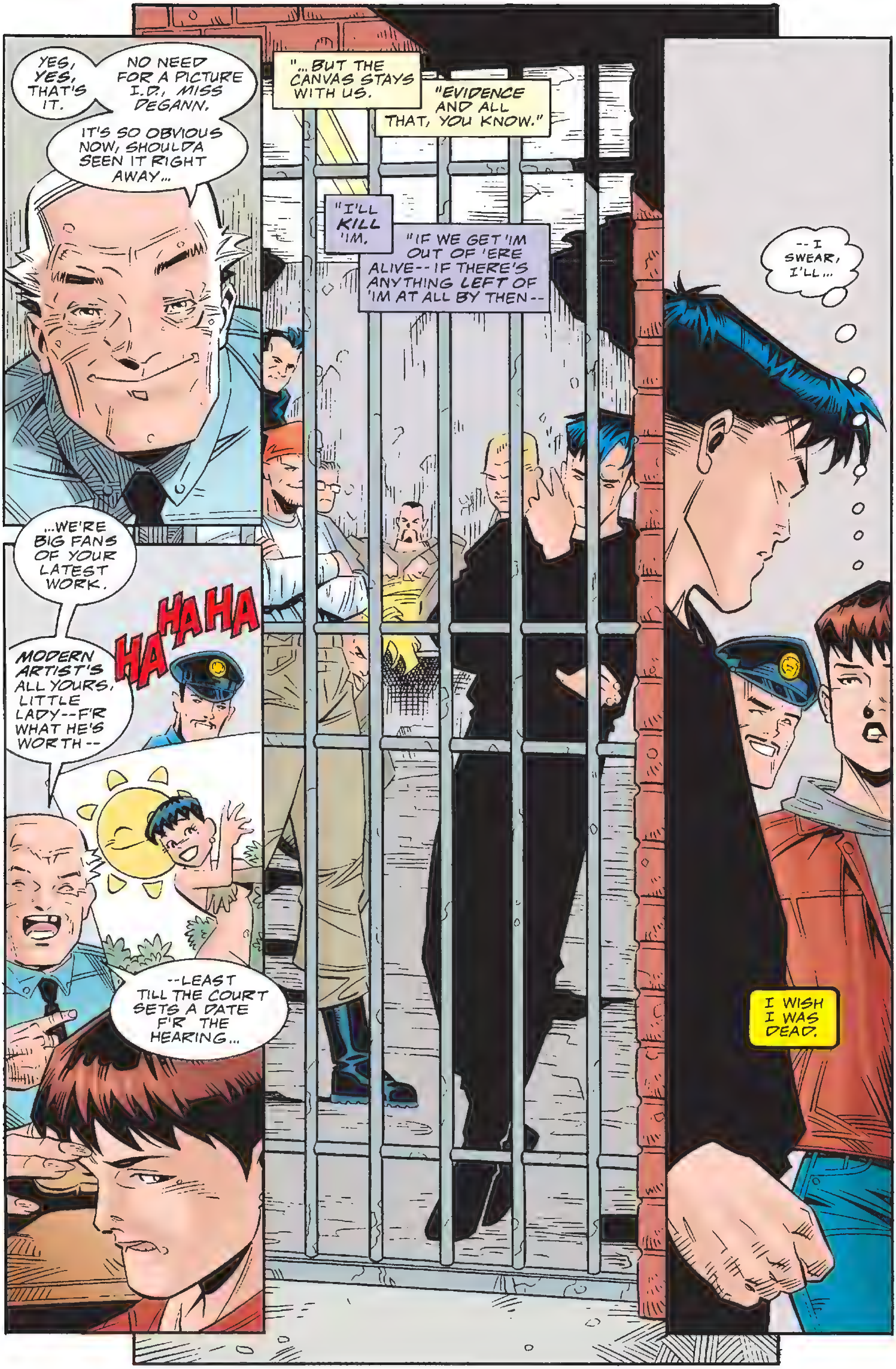
--FREEZE!
PUT THE PICASSO DOWN, KID, GENTLY--AND VERY, VERY SLOWLY--
--AND START TELLIN' US WHAT WE WANNA HEAR...
Stan Lee PRESENTS:
FACING FACTS
N-NAME'S STARK.
TONY STARK.
AND I NEED A LAWYER.
TERRY KAVANAGH WRITER
JIM CHEUNG & MARC CAMPOS PENCILERS
MARK McKENNA INKER
JOHN KALISZ COLORIST
PHIL FELIX LETTERER
MALIBU COLOR SEPS.
MARK GRUENWALD EDITOR
BOB HARRAS EDITOR IN CHIEF

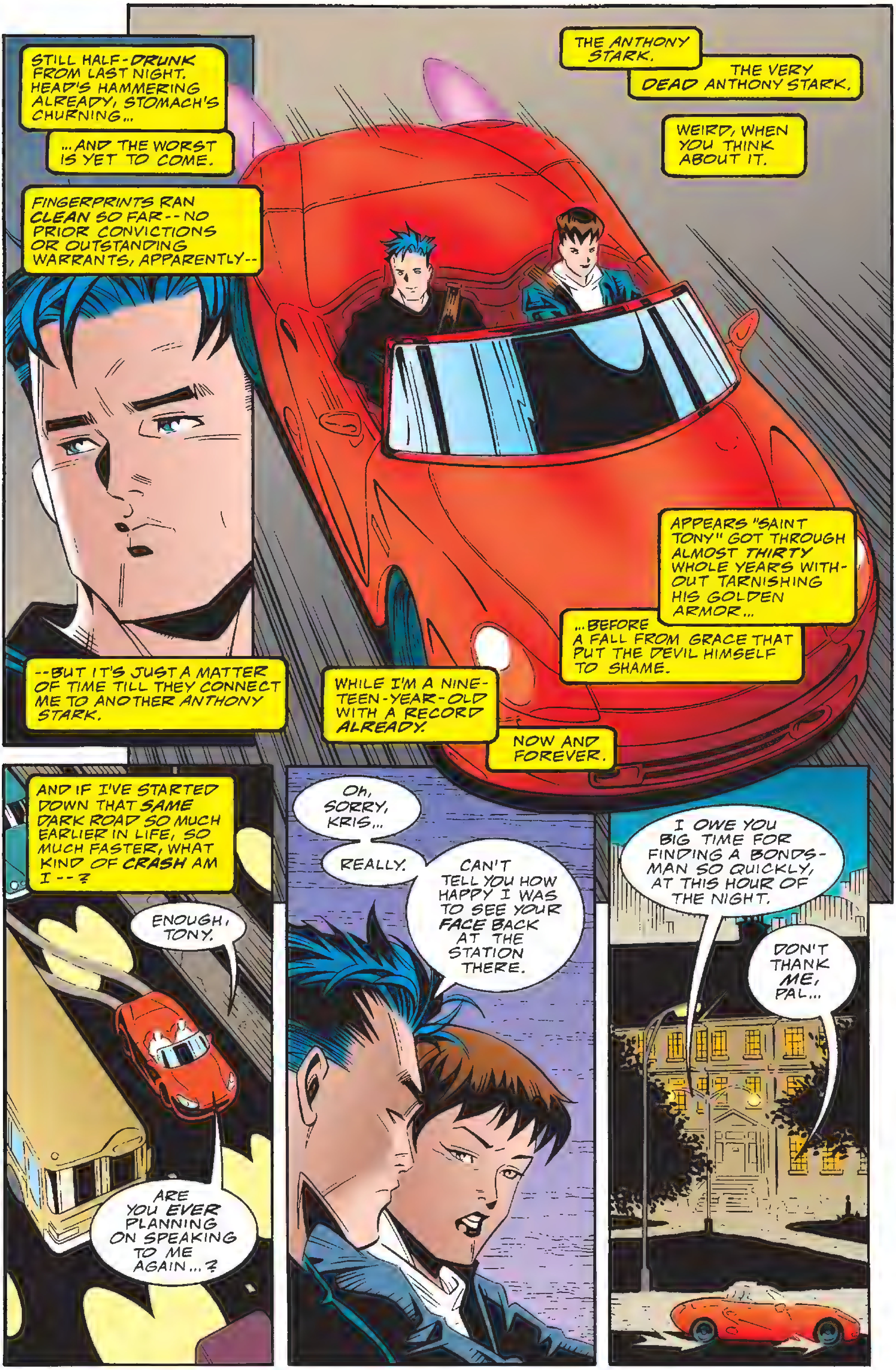

MEANWHILE, AT THE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FIRM KNOWN AS STARK ENTERPRISES--
--A LITTLE PIECE OF NEW YORK REACHING FOR THE SKY ABOVE CALIFORNIA'S SO-CALLED SILICON VALLEY--
--IT'S ALREADY TOO LATE FOR LAWYERS...
ARE YOU SURE...?
I CERTAINLY 'PPRECIATE THE OFFER AND ALL, PEPPER, DON'T GET ME WRONG...
...BUT I CAN SEE HOW MUCH IT'S BOTHERIN' YOU JUST TO BE HERE. CONSIDERIN' THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I PROBABLY SHOULD'VE REALIZED HOW DIFFICULT THIS WAS GOING TO BE.
LET'S DO IT, JIM.
MRS. ARBOGAST SAID SHE'D BE JUST DOWN THE HALL, SUPERVISING THE RECORDS REMOVAL.
AND SHE'D BE MORE THAN WILLIN' TO--
APPRECIATE THE THOUGHT, MR. RHODES.
BUT NOT NECESSARY.

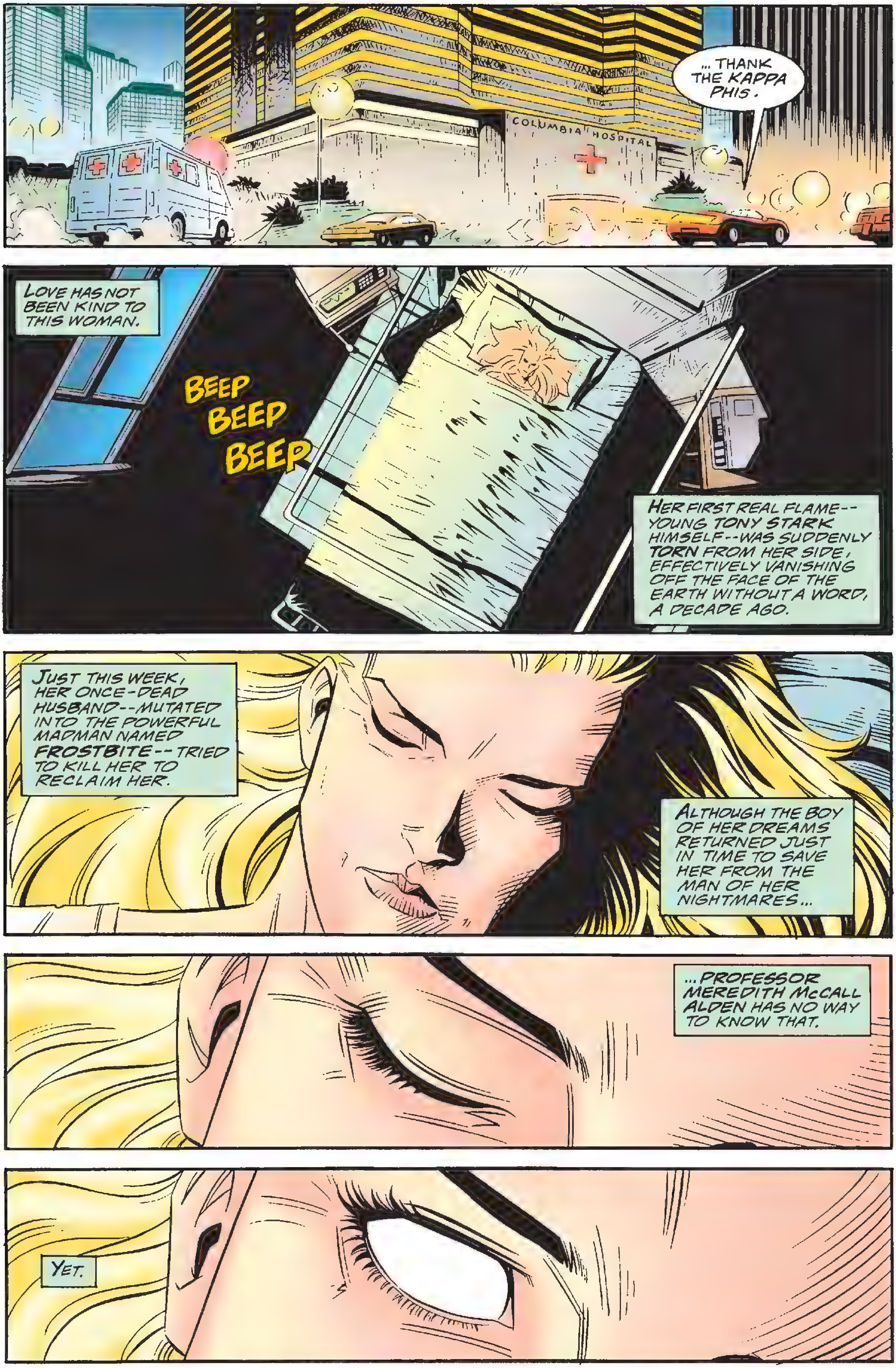
THIS IS ROUGHER THAN EXPECTED, I CONFESS, BUT IT'S **GOT** TO BE DONE.
AND IT'S GOT TO BE **ME.**
EVERYTHING THAT COUNTS IN MY LIFE EFFECTIVELY **BEGAN** IN THIS OFFICE, WITH MY VERY FIRST PROMOTION TO EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT. I VIRTUALLY MET MY HUSBAND RIGHT HERE...
...AT TONY STARK'S DESK.
CLEANING IT OUT IS THE **LEAST** WE CAN DO FOR HIM NOW.
SEPARATING PERSONAL FROM PROFESSIONAL IS WHAT I DO **BEST,** YOU KNOW.
WISH I COULD SAY THE **SAME,** PEP.
TONY AND I MET IN THE TRENCHES, YOU KNOW, LONGER AGO THAN HE EVER LIKED TO ADMIT...
...FORGIN' SOMETHIN' A LOT TOUGHER THAN FRIENDSHIP OURSELVES.
A BOND TOO **STRONG** FOR ITS OWN GOOD, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT--TOO **RIGID** TO BEND WHEN NECESSARY, THAT'S FOR SURE--
--STILL **UNBROKEN** NOW.
ALL THOSE YEARS FIGHTIN' SIDE-BY-SIDE, WATCHIN' EACH OTHER'S BACKS--ON THE BATTLEFIELD, IN THE BOARDROOM--
--AND I JUST CAN'T BE SURE IF HE'D BE **WITH** US ON THIS ONE...

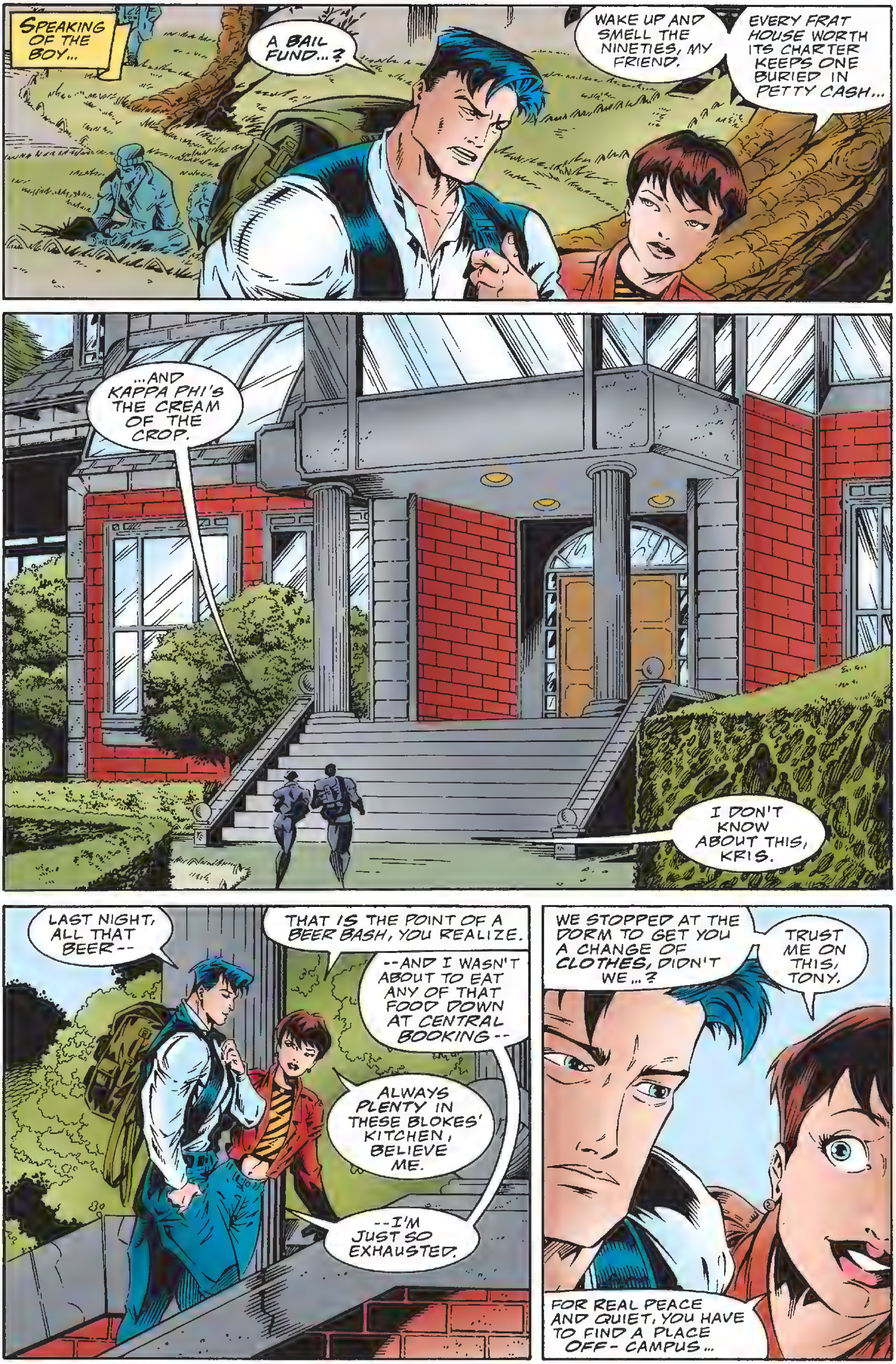

"...IF WE'RE DOIN' THE RIGHT THING."
Bethany Cabe
Harold Hogan
THANK YOU, MR. HOGAN--
--MS. CABE--
--MR. KIRIN APPRECIATES THE BOARD'S COOPERATION WITH THESE FINAL TRANSITION FORMS.
FUJIKAWA, INC. APPRECIATES IT, TOBI.
STARK ENTERPRISE
I, IN FACT, AM CONCERNED WITH NOTHING BUT THEIR CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATION TO EVACUATE ALL NON-ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL FROM OUR NEWLY-ACQUIRED HOLDINGS...
...WITHIN FORTY-EIGHT HOURS.
TWO DAYS...
HAD T'HAPPEN, BETH.
ZIMMER'S SECURITY CLEARANCE--FER AS LONG AS IT LASTS, AT LEAST--IS THE ONLY ACCESS LEFT T'US NOW.
YA KNOW THE DRILL, ABE.
GOOD LUCK...

"...BACK IN THE BIG, BAD APPLE."
ONE POLICE PLAZA, SPECIFICALLY, AT THE LOWER END OF THE BUSTLING METROPOLIS...
POLICE
...IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.
BEEN THROUGH THIS FRAT RUSH ROUTINE WITH THE COLUMBIA U. KAPPA PHIS BEFORE, KID -- MORE TIMES THAN I'D CARE T'COUNT, COME T'THINK--
--BUT WE HADN'T SEEN THIS PARTICULAR PRANK IN OVER TWENTY YEARS NOW.
THOUGHT MAYBE THEY'D FINALLY WISED UP.
MESSIN' WITH A MASTERPIECE, EVEN IF IT'S JUST T' HANG Y'R OWN PIECE O'--
WOULDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THAT, OFFICER CAPTAIN SIR.
THEY SENT ME OVER FROM THE -- AS I'M SURE YOU CAN SEE THERE -- I WAS HOPING, ACTUALLY...
PAPERWORK ALL SEEMS TO BE IN ORDER, NO DOUBT 'BOUT THAT, MISS...
...DEGANN, IS IT?
KRIS DEGANN, I SEE HERE.
DO I KNOW YOU FROM SOMEWHERE, DEGANN...?
NO, NO, CERTAINLY NOT -- COULDN'T BE, NOT ME --
--I'M A TRANSFER STUDENT FROM LONDON. TRUTH IS, JUST STARTED THIS SEMESTER, LAST SEPTEMBER, TO BE EXACT, AND...
...AND I'M HERE TO BAIL OUT TONY STARK.

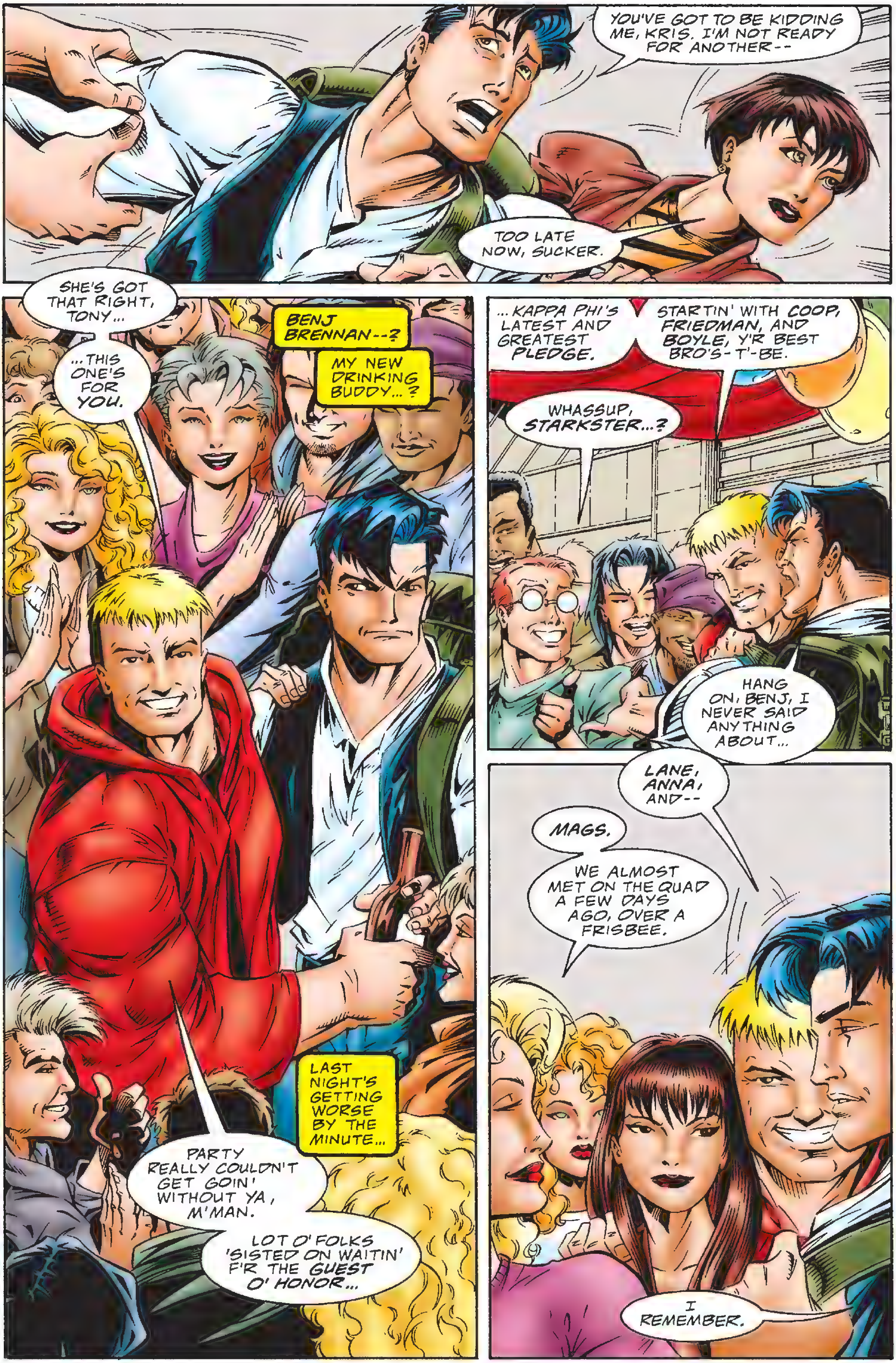

YES, YES, THAT'S IT.
NO NEED FOR A PICTURE I.D., MISS DEGANN.
IT'S SO OBVIOUS NOW, SHOULDA SEEN IT RIGHT AWAY...
...WE'RE BIG FANS OF YOUR LATEST WORK.
MODERN ARTIST'S ALL YOURS, LITTLE LADY--F'R WHAT HE'S WORTH--
HAHAHA
--LEAST TILL THE COURT SETS A DATE F'R THE HEARING...
"...BUT THE CANVAS STAYS WITH US.
"EVIDENCE AND ALL THAT, YOU KNOW."
"I'LL KILL 'IM.
"IF WE GET 'IM OUT OF 'ERE ALIVE--IF THERE'S ANYTHING LEFT OF 'IM AT ALL BY THEN--
--I SWEAR, I'LL...
I WISH I WAS DEAD.


STILL HALF-DRUNK FROM LAST NIGHT. HEAD'S HAMMERING ALREADY, STOMACH'S CHURNING...
...AND THE WORST IS YET TO COME.
FINGERPRINTS RAN CLEAN SO FAR--NO PRIOR CONVICTIONS OR OUTSTANDING WARRANTS, APPARENTLY--
--BUT IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME TILL THEY CONNECT ME TO ANOTHER ANTHONY STARK.
THE ANTHONY STARK.
THE VERY DEAD ANTHONY STARK.
WEIRD, WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT.
APPEARS "SAINT TONY" GOT THROUGH ALMOST THIRTY WHOLE YEARS WITHOUT TARNISHING HIS GOLDEN ARMOR...
...BEFORE A FALL FROM GRACE THAT PUT THE DEVIL HIMSELF TO SHAME.
WHILE I'M A NINETEEN-YEAR-OLD WITH A RECORD ALREADY.
NOW AND FOREVER.
AND IF I'VE STARTED DOWN THAT SAME DARK ROAD SO MUCH EARLIER IN LIFE, SO MUCH FASTER, WHAT KIND OF CRASH AM I--?
ENOUGH, TONY.
ARE YOU EVER PLANNING ON SPEAKING TO ME AGAIN...?
Oh, SORRY, KRIS...
REALLY.
CAN'T TELL YOU HOW HAPPY I WAS TO SEE YOUR FACE BACK AT THE STATION THERE.
I OWE YOU BIG TIME FOR FINDING A BONDSMAN SO QUICKLY, AT THIS HOUR OF THE NIGHT.
DON'T THANK ME, PAL...


...THANK THE KAPPA PHIS.
COLUMBIA HOSPITAL
LOVE HAS NOT BEEN KIND TO THIS WOMAN.
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
HER FIRST REAL FLAME-- YOUNG TONY STARK HIMSELF--WAS SUDDENLY TORN FROM HER SIDE, EFFECTIVELY VANISHING OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH WITHOUT A WORD, A DECADE AGO.
JUST THIS WEEK, HER ONCE-DEAD HUSBAND--MUTATED INTO THE POWERFUL MADMAN NAMED FROSTBITE--TRIED TO KILL HER TO RECLAIM HER.
ALTHOUGH THE BOY OF HER DREAMS RETURNED JUST IN TIME TO SAVE HER FROM THE MAN OF HER NIGHTMARES...
...PROFESSOR MEREDITH McCALL ALDEN HAS NO WAY TO KNOW THAT.
YET.

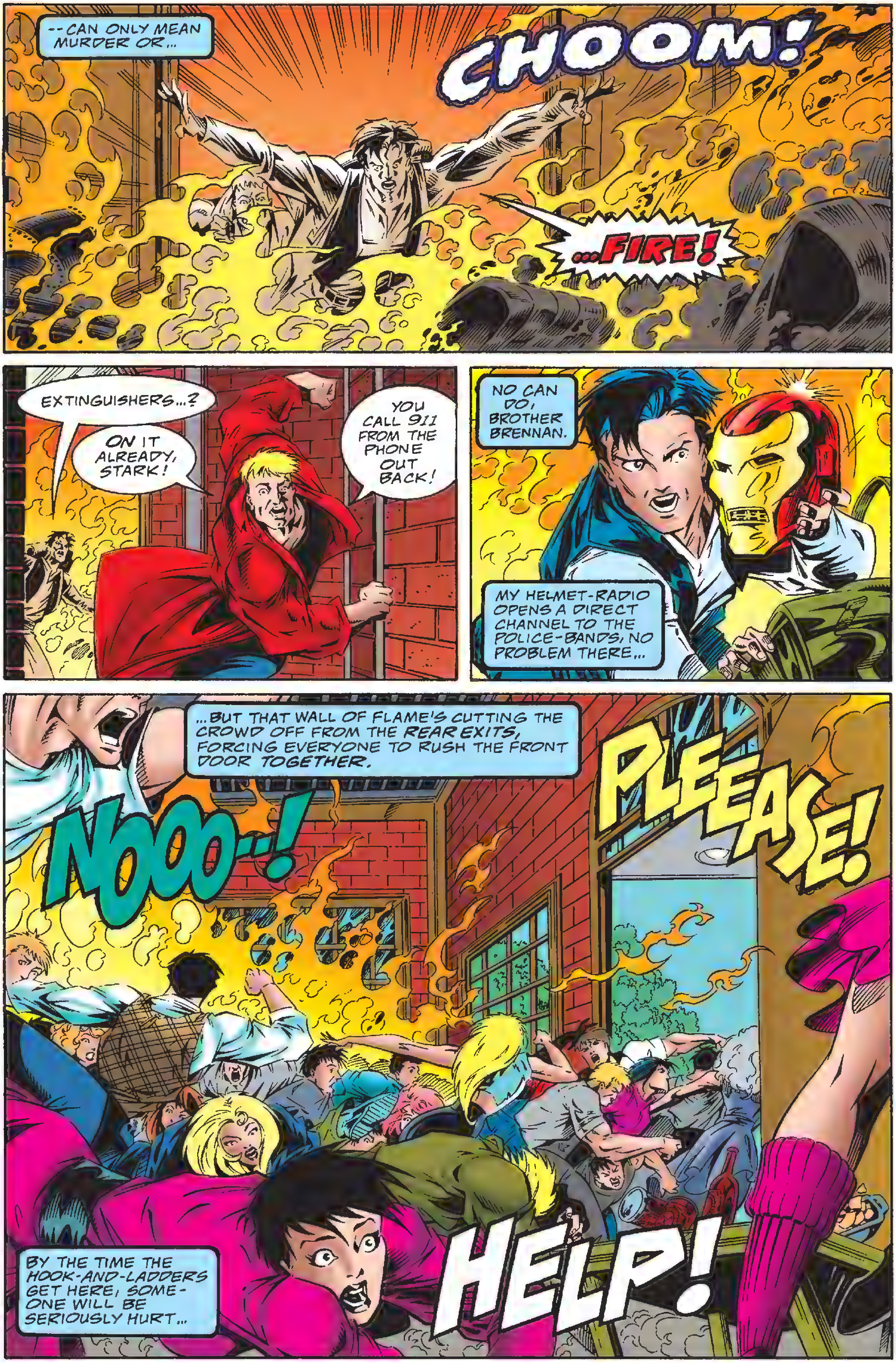

SPEAKING OF THE BOY...
A BAIL FUND...?
WAKE UP AND SMELL THE NINETIES, MY FRIEND.
EVERY FRAT HOUSE WORTH ITS CHARTER KEEPS ONE BURIED IN PETTY CASH...
...AND KAPPA PHI'S THE CREAM OF THE CROP.
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS, KRIS.
LAST NIGHT, ALL THAT BEER--
THAT *IS* THE POINT OF A BEER BASH, YOU REALIZE.
--AND I WASN'T ABOUT TO EAT ANY OF THAT FOOD DOWN AT CENTRAL BOOKING--
ALWAYS PLENTY IN THESE BLOKES' KITCHEN, BELIEVE ME.
--I'M JUST SO EXHAUSTED.
WE STOPPED AT THE DORM TO GET YOU A CHANGE OF CLOTHES, DIDN'T WE...?
TRUST ME ON THIS, TONY.
FOR REAL PEACE AND QUIET, YOU HAVE TO FIND A PLACE OFF-CAMPUS...

...WHAT IF GOD WAS ONE OF US...
...AWAY FROM THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE.
...JUST A SLOB LIKE ONE OF US...


YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME, KRIS. I'M NOT READY FOR ANOTHER--
TOO LATE NOW, SUCKER.
SHE'S GOT THAT RIGHT, TONY...
...THIS ONE'S FOR YOU.
BENJ BRENNAN--?
MY NEW DRINKING BUDDY...?
LAST NIGHT'S GETTING WORSE BY THE MINUTE...
PARTY REALLY COULDN'T GET GOIN' WITHOUT YA, M'MAN.
LOT O' FOLKS 'SISTED ON WAITIN' F'R THE GUEST O' HONOR...
...KAPPA PHI'S LATEST AND GREATEST PLEDGE.
STARTIN' WITH COOP, FRIEDMAN, AND BOYLE, Y'R BEST BRO'S-T'-BE.
WHASSUP, STARKSTER...?
HANG ON, BENJ, I NEVER SAID ANYTHING ABOUT...
LANE, ANNA, AND--
MAGS.
WE ALMOST MET ON THE QUAD A FEW DAYS AGO, OVER A FRISBEE.
I REMEMBER.

AND REMY LAWFORD.
M' NUMBER ONE.
HI.
H-HI.
WAY I SEE IT, FROSH-MAN...
... THINGS GOT A LITTLE OUT O' CONTROL LAST NIGHT, AND YOU TOOK THE FALL F'R ALL O' US.
WE'RE THINKIN' THERE MIGHT BE A PLACE F'R YA HERE.
THE KAPPA PHI HALL O' HEROES.
MET-SWAP USED T' BE OUR SIGNATURE-STUNT, Y'KNOW, ONE O' OURS F'R ONE O' THEIRS -- LEFT SAFE AND SOUND ON THE GROUND, O' COURSE --
-- THE GUARDS' ROUTES ARE EVEN PASSED DOWN FROM THE SENIORS IN A SECRET CEREMONY EVERY YEAR.

BUT HANEY HERE, CLASS O' '77, WAS THE LAST IN BEFORE THE MUSEUM ALARMED THE ROOF.
'LEAST TILL YOU HOT-WIRED THAT CIRCUIT-BREAKER F'R US.
MUSEUM
ALWAYS ROOM F'R ANOTHER BRAIN IN THE HOUSE, I SAY.
SONNY SPENCER, '68.
THE SONNY SPENCER...?
LONG BEFORE THE "STONEY" FLICKS, ONE T'EIGHT.
OR THE VEGAS REVUE.
THIS FRATERNITY HAS A PROUD HISTORY, TONY.
A LONG TRADITION O' HONOR AND GLORY THAT EVERY KAPPA STRIVES T'UPHOLD, BEFORE AND AFTER GRADUATION.
WINNING GOAL O' THE STATE FINALS.
LAST YEAR.
AND I COULDN'TA DONE IT WITHOUT THE REST O' THE TEAM.
TOO WEIRD.
THE COMMUNAL ATMOSPHERE, THE CONSTANT ECHO OF LAUGHTER IN THESE HALLS, HAS A CERTAIN APPEAL ALL OF A SUDDEN.
WITH MY FAMILY...GONE-- NO REAL FRIENDS TO SPEAK OF HERE AND NOW--
--I CAN'T HELP WONDER IF...
YAIIIEEEE!
SCREAM LIKE THAT--SUCH STARK TERROR--


--CAN ONLY MEAN MURDER OR...
CHOOM!
...FIRE!
EXTINGUISHERS...?
ON IT ALREADY, STARK!
YOU CALL 911 FROM THE PHONE OUT BACK!
NO CAN DO, BROTHER BRENNAN.
MY HELMET-RADIO OPENS A DIRECT CHANNEL TO THE POLICE-BANDS; NO PROBLEM THERE...
...BUT THAT WALL OF FLAME'S CUTTING THE CROWD OFF FROM THE REAR EXITS, FORCING EVERYONE TO RUSH THE FRONT DOOR TOGETHER.
NOOO--!
PLEEEASE!
BY THE TIME THE HOOK-AND-LADDERS GET HERE, SOMEONE WILL BE SERIOUSLY HURT...
HELP!

...'LESS I DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT FIRST.
CHEST-PLATE'S ON-LINE, AS USUAL.
AS ALWAYS.
JUST A MATTER OF TRIGGERING ANKLE AND WRIST-HOUSINGS--RELEASING BOOTS AND GAUNTLETS INTO PLACE--
CHK
CHK
--AND IONIZING THE HOLO-ARMOR BETWEEN, CREATING A SOLID-LIGHT FORCE-FIELD...
...GOOD AS GOLD.
BETTER, IN FACT.
ZZZT
ZZZ
FAR MORE RELIABLE.
THE HEAT IS ON...
...BUT IRON MAN IS UP-AND-RUNNING!
MOVE! MOVE!
hKK
hKK

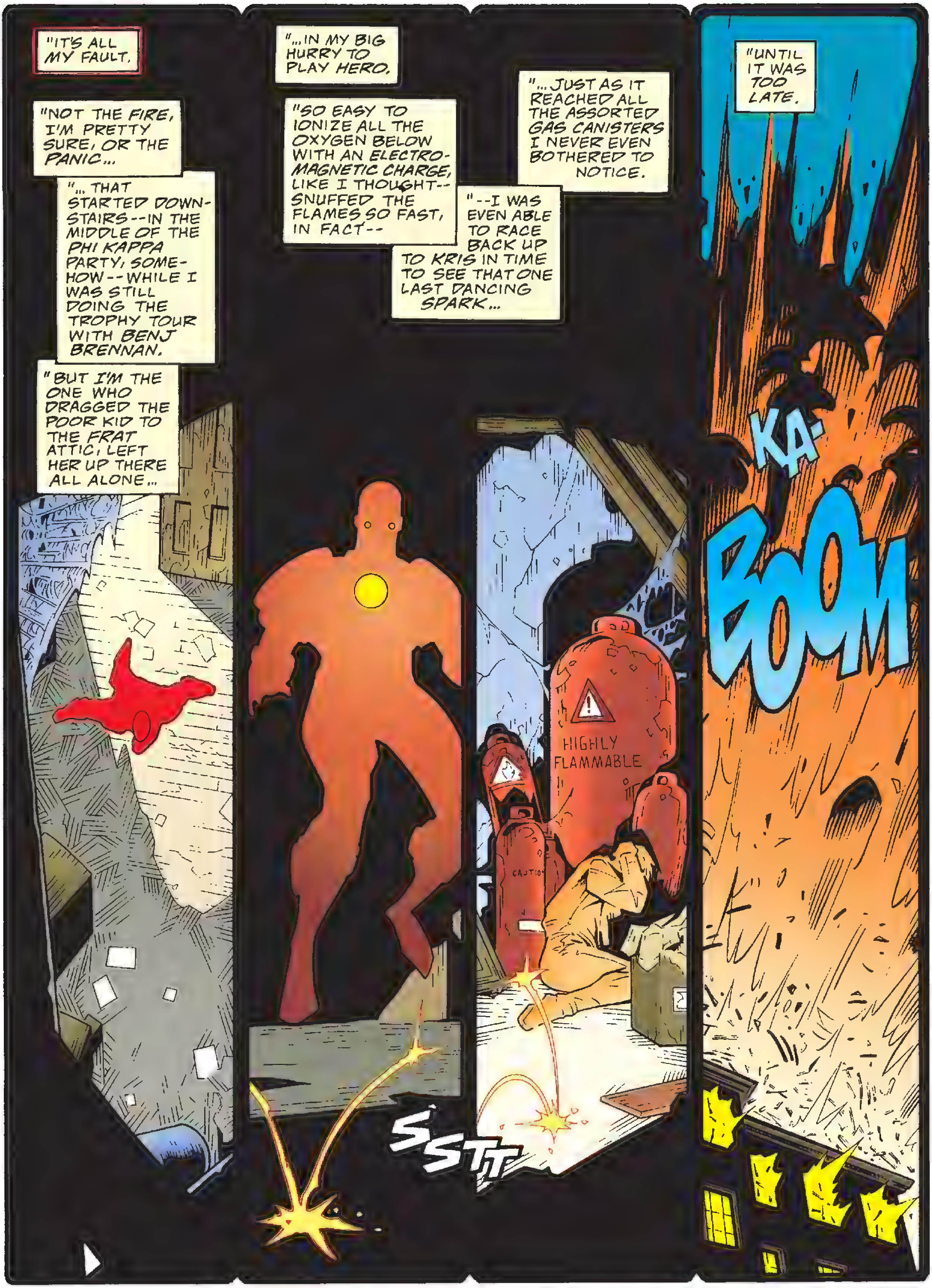
HALF THIS MOB WAS ALREADY TOO BUZZED TO FIND THE FRONT DOOR BY THE TIME I GOT HERE--
--AND THIS SMOKE'S ONLY MAKING THINGS...
...W-WORSE...
hKK hKK
STUPID, STUPID, STUPID.
FORGOT TO LOCK DOWN HELMET-INTEGRITY FIRST... ACTIVATE THE OXYGEN FILTRATION SYSTEMS AND OPTIONAL OPTICALS...
CHK
FELT SO WOOZY THERE...
AGAIN.
HAVE TO GET A LITTLE AIR IN HERE--FAST--BEFORE--
SKRAASH!
NO--!
FWOOM
BACKDRAFT FROM THE WINDOWS IS BACKFIRING IN MY FACE...
YAAAH!
...ACTUALLY FANNING THE FLAMES AND--
RELAX, COOP, RELAX!
JUST CAUGHT A BIT OF YOUR AIR THERE...
KRIS...?

PRIORITY ONE.
WHO...?
WHAT ARE YOU--
YOWZ!
SORRY, KR--
--M-MISS--
KRASH
--BUT YOU SHOULD BE SAFE UP HERE, OUT OF THE WAY OF DANGER, LONG ENOUGH--
--TO COMPLETELY REVERSE STRATEGY.
IT'S A GAMBLE, BUT...
WIDE-RANGE ELECTRICAL ARCS DISPERSED ACROSS THE TOP OF THE FIRST FLOOR FROM ONE GAUNTLET--
--EXPOSED TO A MAGNETIC SPECTRUM ARRAY FROM THE OTHER--

--CATALYZE A FULLY-REALIZED ELECTRO-MAGNETIC FIELD...
FWOOSH
...THAT INSTANTLY IONIZES ALL THE OXYGEN IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY.
FFT
THAT'S A GIVEN.
FFT
FFT
NO AIR, NO FIRE.
BUT I STILL HAVE TO HOPE THAT THE FLAMES BURN OUT COMPLETELY--
WHE
--AND THE PEOPLE ONLY PASS OUT MOMENTARILY--
uhhn...
--BEFORE THE NIGHT WIND FINALLY RUSHES IN TO FILL THE VOID...

CLEAR THE BUILDING, MEN-- NOW--
--NOW!
COPS ARE HERE IN FORCE ALREADY; FIRE-CREWS CAN'T BE FAR BEHIND...
hhf hhf
...AND THE KIDS ARE ALL COMING AROUND, ONE BY ONE.
NO HARM, NO FOUL.
RUSH OF O₂ FROM OUTSIDE EVEN CLEARED MY HEAD A LITTLE, BROUGHT ME A CHANCE TO--
O₂ ...?!
THE FLAMMABLE OXYGEN CANNISTERS--
--NEXT TO PRESSURIZED HELIUM AND NITROUS TANKS--
--IN THE ATTIC WHERE I LEFT...
...KRIIIIS!
THOOOM!
NEXT-- THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME...!

MARVEL COMICS
IRON MAN
JULY '96 330
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THE INVINCIBLE
IRON MAN
AND
WAR MACHINE
McK 4-96
WHEN
STOCKPILE
STRIKES!


"IT'S ALL MY FAULT.
"NOT THE *FIRE*, I'M PRETTY SURE, OR THE *PANIC*...
"...THAT STARTED DOWNSTAIRS--IN THE MIDDLE OF THE *PHI KAPPA PARTY*, SOMEHOW--WHILE I WAS STILL DOING THE *TROPHY TOUR* WITH *BENJ BRENNAN*.
"BUT *I'M* THE ONE WHO DRAGGED THE POOR KID TO THE *FRAT* ATTIC, LEFT HER UP THERE ALL ALONE...
"...IN *MY* BIG HURRY TO PLAY *HERO*.
"*SO* EASY TO IONIZE ALL THE OXYGEN BELOW WITH AN *ELECTROMAGNETIC CHARGE*, LIKE I THOUGHT--SNUFFED THE FLAMES SO FAST, IN FACT--
"--I WAS EVEN ABLE TO RACE BACK UP TO *KRIS* IN TIME TO SEE THAT ONE LAST DANCING SPARK...
SSTT
"...JUST AS IT REACHED ALL THE ASSORTED *GAS CANISTERS* I NEVER EVEN BOTHERED TO NOTICE.
HIGHLY FLAMMABLE
CAUTION
"UNTIL IT WAS *TOO LATE*.
KA-BOOM

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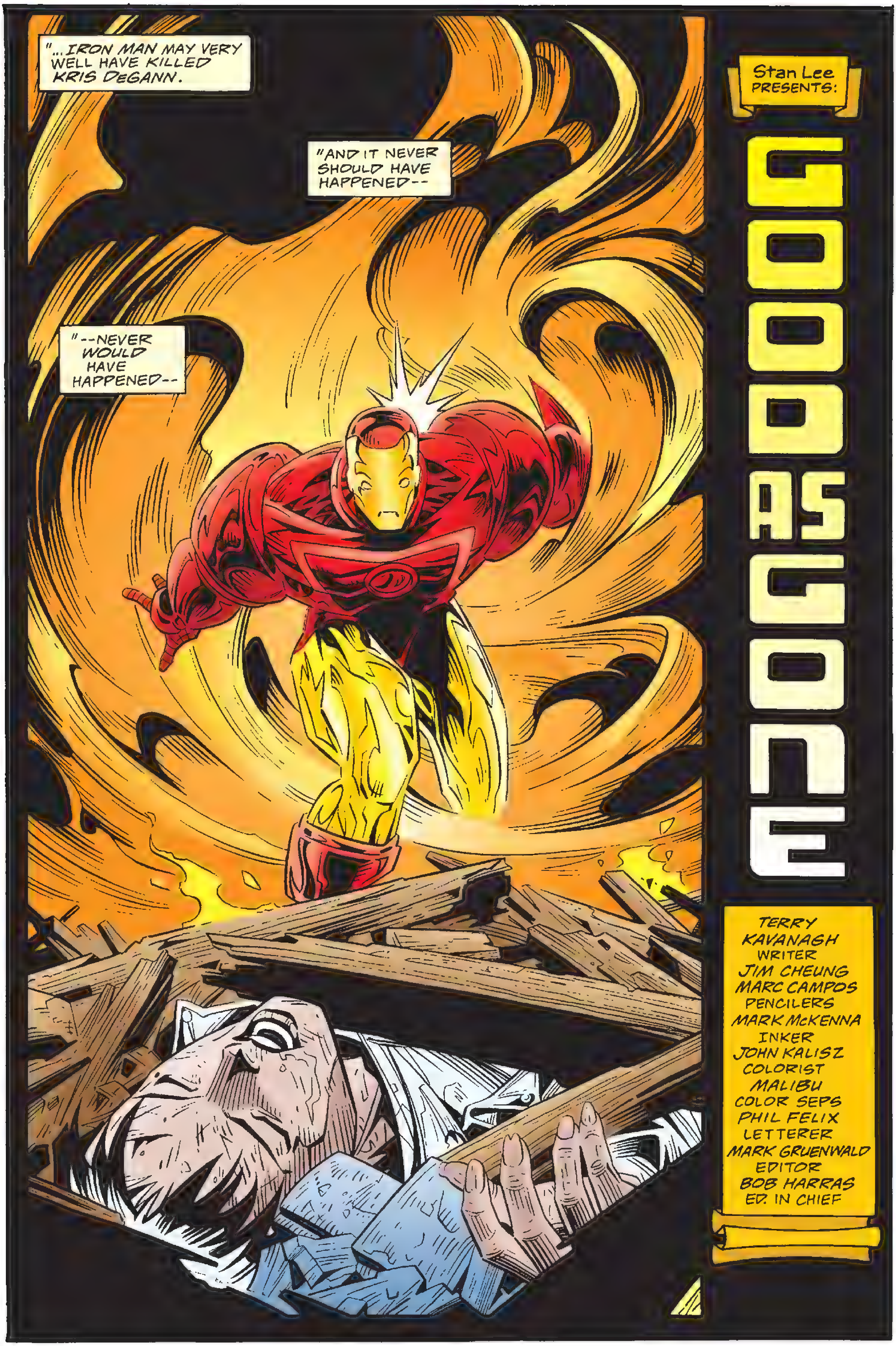
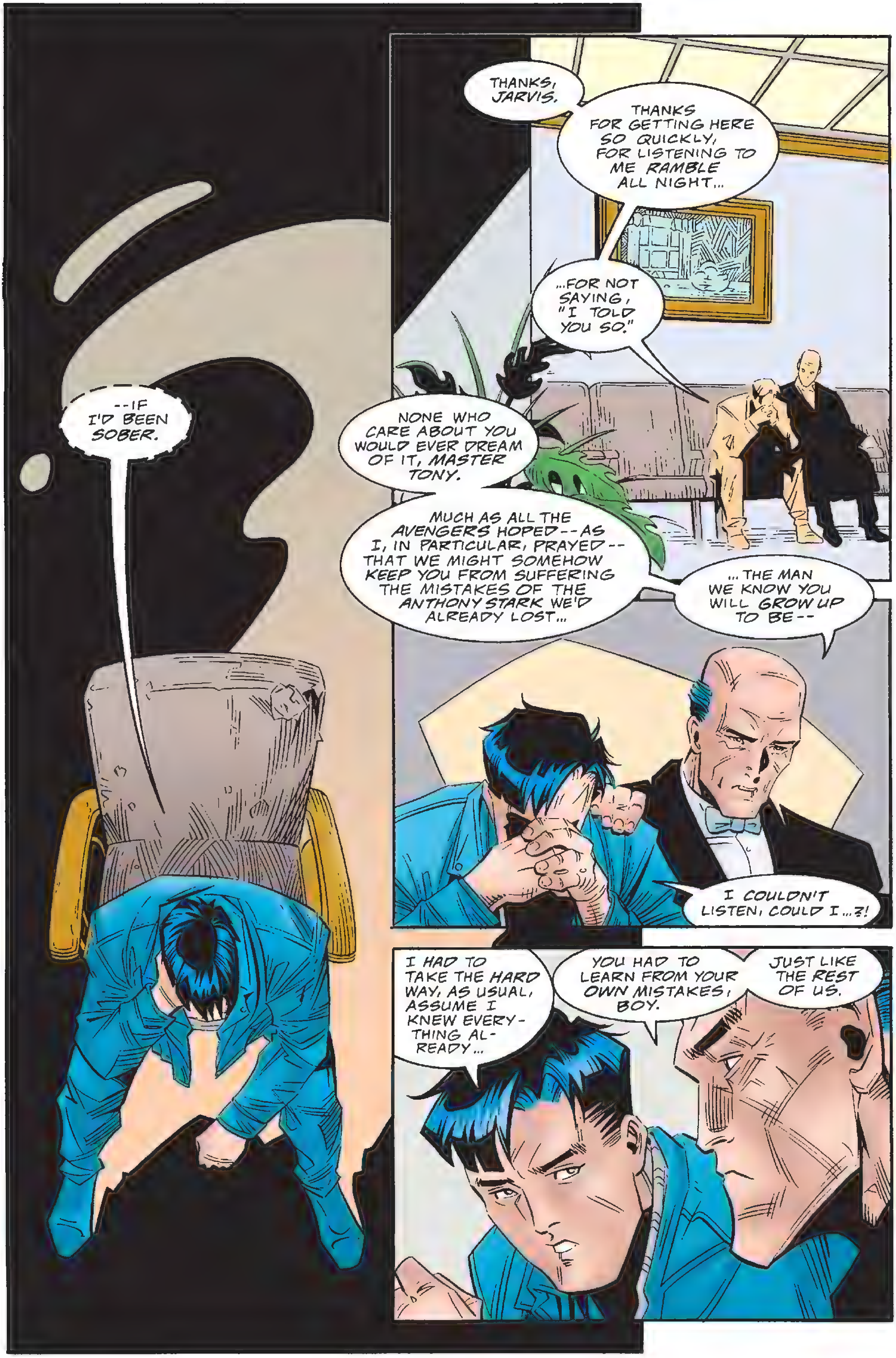
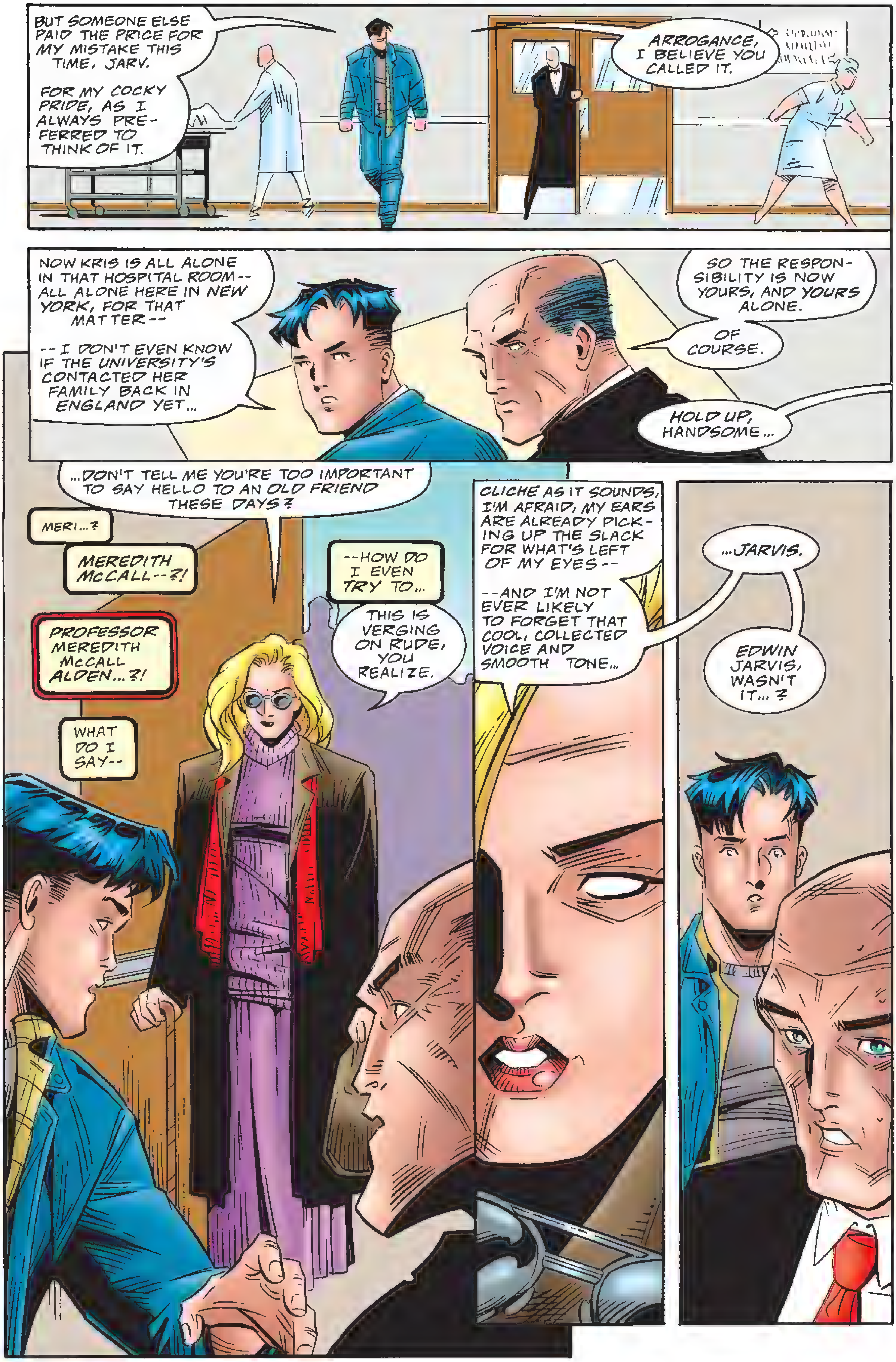
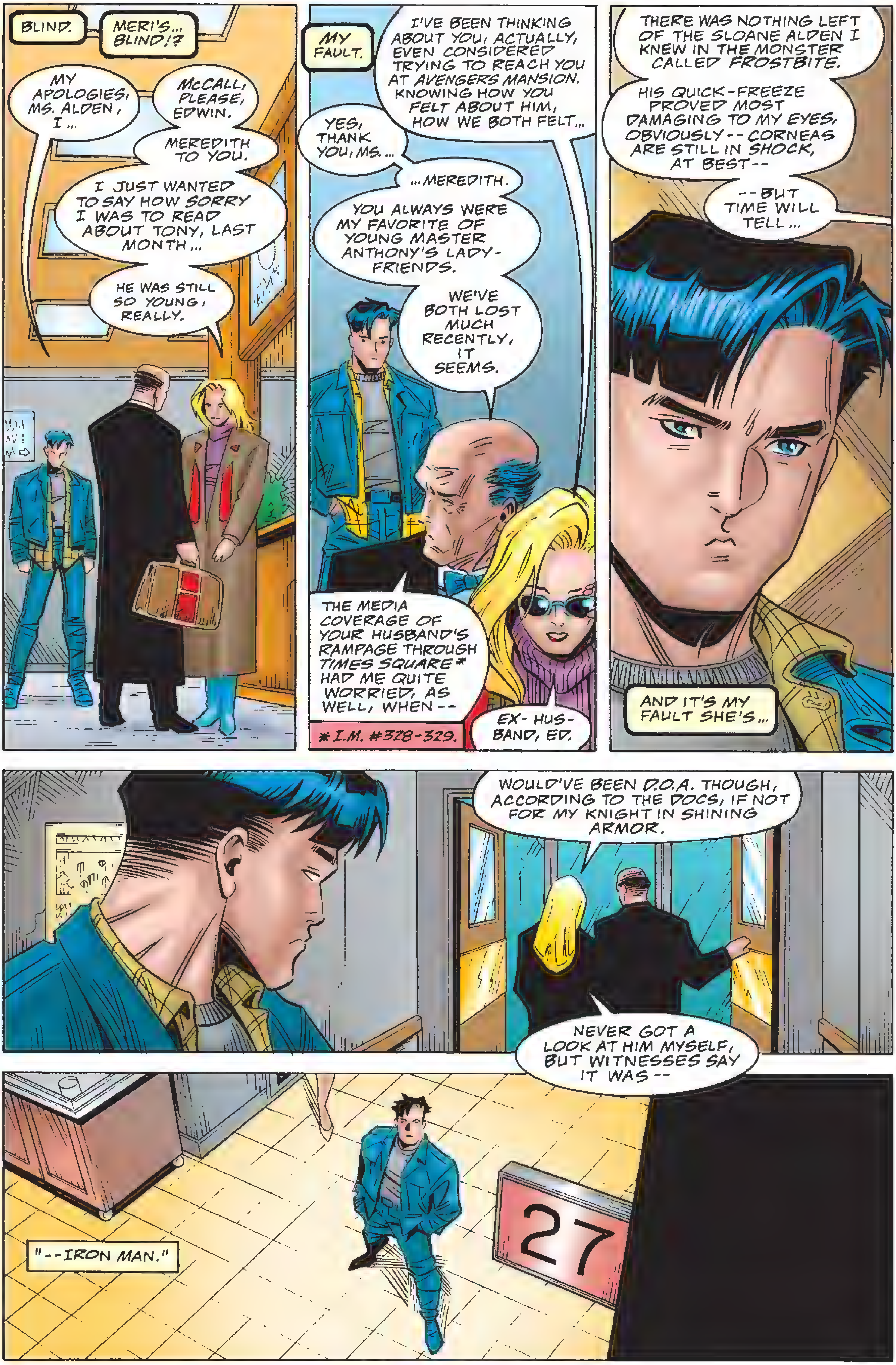
"ANOTHER E-M INSTA-VACUUM CAPTURED AND CONTAINED MOST OF THE FORCE OF THE EXPLOSION, ALL RIGHT...
KRZZK
"...EVEN AS I CROSS-POLARIZED MY GAUNTLETS TO REPEL AND REDIRECT THE BRUNT OF THE BLAST--
"--STRAIGHT UP AND OUT INTO THE NIGHT.
"BUT THE DAMAGE WAS DONE ALREADY, GOD HELP ME...


"...IRON MAN MAY VERY WELL HAVE KILLED KRIS DeGANN.
"AND IT NEVER SHOULD HAVE HAPPENED--
"--NEVER WOULD HAVE HAPPENED--
Stan Lee PRESENTS:
GOOD AS GONE
TERRY KAVANAGH WRITER
JIM CHEUNG MARC CAMPOS PENCILERS
MARK McKENNA INKER
JOHN KALISZ COLORIST
MALIBU COLOR SEPS
PHIL FELIX LETTERER
MARK GRUENWALD EDITOR
BOB HARRAS ED. IN CHIEF


--IF I'D BEEN SOBER.
THANKS, JARVIS.
THANKS FOR GETTING HERE SO QUICKLY, FOR LISTENING TO ME RAMBLE ALL NIGHT...
...FOR NOT SAYING, "I TOLD YOU SO."
NONE WHO CARE ABOUT YOU WOULD EVER DREAM OF IT, MASTER TONY.
MUCH AS ALL THE AVENGERS HOPED--AS I, IN PARTICULAR, PRAYED--THAT WE MIGHT SOMEHOW KEEP YOU FROM SUFFERING THE MISTAKES OF THE ANTHONY STARK WE'D ALREADY LOST...
...THE MAN WE KNOW YOU WILL GROW UP TO BE--
I COULDN'T LISTEN, COULD I...?!
I HAD TO TAKE THE HARD WAY, AS USUAL, ASSUME I KNEW EVERYTHING ALREADY...
YOU HAD TO LEARN FROM YOUR OWN MISTAKES, BOY.
JUST LIKE THE REST OF US.


BUT SOMEONE ELSE PAID THE PRICE FOR MY MISTAKE THIS TIME, JARV.
FOR MY COCKY PRIDE, AS I ALWAYS PREFERRED TO THINK OF IT.
ARROGANCE, I BELIEVE YOU CALLED IT.
NOW KRIS IS ALL ALONE IN THAT HOSPITAL ROOM-- ALL ALONE HERE IN NEW YORK, FOR THAT MATTER--
--I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF THE UNIVERSITY'S CONTACTED HER FAMILY BACK IN ENGLAND YET...
SO THE RESPONSIBILITY IS NOW YOURS, AND YOURS ALONE.
OF COURSE.
HOLD UP, HANDSOME...
...DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE TOO IMPORTANT TO SAY HELLO TO AN OLD FRIEND THESE DAYS?
MERI...?
MEREDITH McCALL--?!
PROFESSOR MEREDITH McCALL ALDEN...?!
WHAT DO I SAY--
--HOW DO I EVEN TRY TO...
THIS IS VERGING ON RUDE, YOU REALIZE.
CLICHE AS IT SOUNDS, I'M AFRAID, MY EARS ARE ALREADY PICKING UP THE SLACK FOR WHAT'S LEFT OF MY EYES--
--AND I'M NOT EVER LIKELY TO FORGET THAT COOL, COLLECTED VOICE AND SMOOTH TONE...
...JARVIS.
EDWIN JARVIS, WASN'T IT...?


BLIND.
MERI'S... BLIND!?
MY APOLOGIES, MS. ALDEN, I...
McCALL, PLEASE, EDWIN.
MEREDITH TO YOU.
I JUST WANTED TO SAY HOW SORRY I WAS TO READ ABOUT TONY, LAST MONTH...
HE WAS STILL SO YOUNG, REALLY.
MY FAULT.
I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT YOU, ACTUALLY, EVEN CONSIDERED TRYING TO REACH YOU AT AVENGERS MANSION. KNOWING HOW YOU FELT ABOUT HIM, HOW WE BOTH FELT...
YES, THANK YOU, MS. ...
...MEREDITH.
YOU ALWAYS WERE MY FAVORITE OF YOUNG MASTER ANTHONY'S LADY-FRIENDS.
WE'VE BOTH LOST MUCH RECENTLY, IT SEEMS.
THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF YOUR HUSBAND'S RAMPAGE THROUGH TIMES SQUARE* HAD ME QUITE WORRIED, AS WELL, WHEN--
*I.M. #328-329.
EX-HUSBAND, ED.
THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT OF THE SLOANE ALDEN I KNEW IN THE MONSTER CALLED FROSTBITE.
HIS QUICK-FREEZE PROVED MOST DAMAGING TO MY EYES, OBVIOUSLY--CORNEAS ARE STILL IN SHOCK, AT BEST--
--BUT TIME WILL TELL...
AND IT'S MY FAULT SHE'S...
WOULD'VE BEEN D.O.A. THOUGH, ACCORDING TO THE DOCS, IF NOT FOR MY KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR.
NEVER GOT A LOOK AT HIM MYSELF, BUT WITNESSES SAY IT WAS--
"--IRON MAN."
27

REMY...?
PREPARE YOURSELF, TONY.
SHE'S SO WEAK, TIRED -- THE NURSES HAVE BEEN TAKING SO MUCH BLOOD, SO OFTEN --
-- AND SHE'S STILL SLEEPING OFF THE SEDATIVES.
BUT THE DOCTORS HAVE BEEN RUNNING TESTS ALL NIGHT. THEY'VE DIAGNOSED A CONCUSSION...
÷SOB÷ ÷SOB÷
...NOTHING MORE THAN A MINOR CONCUSSION.
KRIS WILL BE JUST FINE WHEN SHE WAKES UP.

THIS WAS ONCE A LIVING, BREATHING PLACE.
IN ITS DAY, IN FACT, THIS STARK INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMPLEX WAS ONE OF LONG ISLAND'S MAJOR EMPLOYERS...
...BUSTLING WITH THE SOUL AND SPIRIT THAT ONLY ANTHONY STARK HIMSELF COULD BRING TO HIS WORK.
TIME CAME, HOWEVER, WHEN THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE COMPANY'S VALUED EMPLOYEES --THE BEST IN ALL THEIR VARIOUS FIELDS, WITHOUT EXCEPTION--
--CHOSE TO JOIN THE NEWLY-CHRISTENED STARK ENTERPRISES ON ITS GRAND EXODUS WESTWARD.
TONY STARK WAS A HARD MAN TO RESIST.
BUT THAT TONY STARK IS DEAD.
AND THE FUTURE-- ALL THAT WAS STARK, IN ANY AND EVERY FORM--
--NOW BELONGS TO FUJIKAWA, INC.
BEEP BEEP
ABRAHAM ZIMMER WAS ONCE THE CHIEF OF SECURITY OPERATIONS FOR THIS PROPERTY...

...AND HE'S GOT SPECIAL BUSINESS HERE TONIGHT.
CAN'T DECIDE WHO'S LUCKIER TO BE GETTING THIS SECOND CHANCE.
KRIS...
...OR ME?
SO MUCH HAS CHANGED HERE IN THE DECADE THAT NEVER PASSED FOR ME.
CITY'S BIGGER SOMEHOW, IF THAT'S POSSIBLE, LARGER THAN LIFE NOW.
EVEN THE GOOD OL' BAXTER BUILDING'S BECOME FOUR FREEDOMS PLAZA, HEADQUARTERS TO AS MANY SUPER-TYPES AS THE STARK TOWNHOUSE...
...AND MOST EVERYONE I KNEW AND LOVED THERE IS LONG GONE, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.
NOT THAT THERE'S BEEN ANY SHORTAGE OF PEOPLE WHO CLAIMED TO KNOW THE MAN I WOULD--COULD--GROW TO BE.
I CAN'T SEEM TO ESCAPE THE UNENDING SUPPLY OF "FRIENDS" AND "FAMILY" LINING UP TO WARN ME ABOUT HIS WEAKNESSES.
MY WEAKNESSES.
MAYBE IT'S FINALLY TIME TO START--
TONY.
OH...

...IT'S YOU.
WAR MACHINE, RIGHT...?
NICE NAME, HERO.
TIMES HAVE CHANGED, I GUESS.
SO YOU CAN CALL ME JIM.
HAD TO FLY A FRIEND O' MINE EAST FOR SOME BUSINESS OUT ON THE ISLAND, AND I FIGURED IT'D BE A GOOD CHANCE FOR YOU AND I TO--
HUG AND BOND...?
SORRY, I DON'T THINK SO.
NOTHING PERSONAL, MISTER RHODES...
...THERE'S JUST NOTHING PERSONAL.
I'VE HEARD ALL THE STORIES, SURE, ABOUT YOUR DAYS IN THE JUNGLE WITH THE BIG T, YOUR BATTLES IN AND OUT OF THE BOARDROOM--AND OVER THE BOTTLE--
--BUT YOU'RE STILL A STRANGER.
AN INTERESTING ONE, ADMITTEDLY--WITH TECHNOLOGY THAT I'D NORMALLY HAVE A MILLION QUESTIONS ABOUT--BUT--
A STRANGER WITH HISTORY, KID.
AND, BELIEVE ME, I HAVE MORE THAN ENOUGH FEELINGS ABOUT TONY STARK...

...FOR BOTH OF US.
IN THE BEST OF TIMES, WE WERE THE BEST OF --
VEEP VEEP
YOU'RE BEEPING.
TOO WEIRD.
HE USES A FULLY-REALIZED MODEL OF THE PROTOTYPE HOLO-COMMUNICATOR I JUST INVENTED...
...TEN YEARS AGO. *
THE FRIEND I MENTIONED EARLIER...
* AS SEEN IN AVENGERS: TIMESLIDE.
"WHAT'S UP, ABE?"
THEY'RE HERE, JIM, ON THE PREMISES ALREADY.
NO IDEA HOW THEY PENETRATED THE DEFENSE PERIMETERS...
...BUT SOMEONE BEAT US TO THE --
SHLLK
uhnn...

FIRST BLOOD TO CALICO.
STEALTH-FIELD'S IMPRESSIVE, ZIMMER-- TAKE IT FROM A FELLOW GHOST IN THE NIGHT--
--BUT YOU BLEW YOUR POSITION TO SEND OUT THAT ALARM.
ADVANTAGE FALLS TO THE SHARPEST CLAWS NOW.
SKRK
THOK
OR THE FASTEST.
GIVE IT UP ALREADY, FURBALL.
ON ANY STALKING GROUND, THE DEADLIEST CAT IS ALWAYS...

...THE ONE WITH THE LONGEST REACH.
TZZZZKK
THAT'S A SINGLE-SHOT TASER, SHERIFF.
AND THAT WAS YOUR SINGLE SH--
ZTTZ
...ONE-ON-O--
THWOK
I CAN LIVE WITH THAT, OLD MAN.
BACK-SPARKING EVERY LIGHT IN THE BUILDING WITH A POWER-SURGE, AS INTENDED.
NO MORE DANCING IN THE DARK, KITTEN.
JUST DOWN TO YOU AND ME NOW...
WHUD
CAN YOU...?!
=UKK=

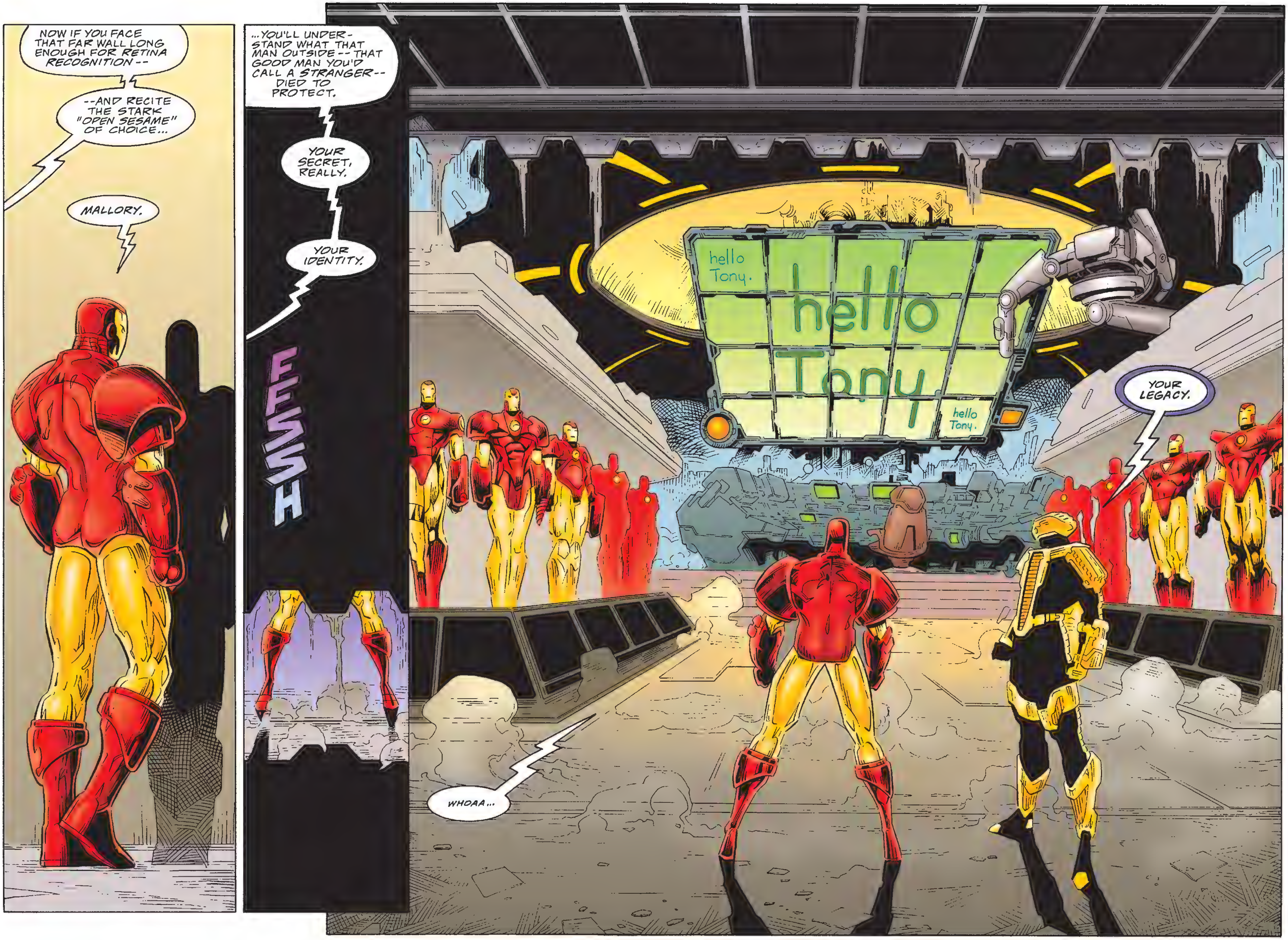
PATHETIC, ZIMMER.
CLIENT TOLD US TO EXPECT TROUBLE, AND EXPECT IT TO BE YOU.
WHO KNEW YOU'D BE CRAWLING AND BEGGING SO SOON...?
NOT CRAWLING, WITCH--
--NEVER BEG--
--G-GRASPING...
ZZZ
TZZZT
N-N-NOO-OO-OOO!
...AT LAST STRAWS.

SAFETY FEATURES IN THIS STARK-TECH SUIT AUTOMATICALLY CONDUCTED THE BRUNT OF THE CHARGE STRAIGHT TO CALICO.
SHE'S DEAD.
NO SIGN OF A BREACH IN THE WALL YET, BUT HER "CLIENT" COULD BE CLOSE.
AND SHE DEFINITELY REFERRED TO AN...
KLK
..."US"!?
CHOOM
RATATATATATATAT
YEAARGH!
SKRAAKH
NAMED AFTER THE LEGENDARY GREEK MOUNTAIN--MYTHICAL ABODE OF THE MUSES--
--BUT SHROUDED IN SILENCE AND SHADOWS, FAR BENEATH THE EARTH...
...HELICON IS HIS HOME.
ONE DOWN.

LONG ISLAND...
HANG ON, HANG ON-- HANG ON--
--GOTCHA!
uhnn...
MR. ZIMMER...?
ZIMMER!?
DON'T DO THIS, MISTER-- NOT NOW--
'S OKAY NOW, MR. ZIMMER.
I'LL HAVE YOU AT THE HOSPITAL BEFORE--
--PLEASE...
...NOT NOW!
BREATHE, BLAST IT--
CHFF CHFF CHFF

--BREATHE...
≑KFK≑ ≑KFK≑
YES.
'S FUNNY, REALLY...
...TONY...
...THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...
NO, NO, NO, NO, NO...
...NOT AGAIN.
THANKS, KID.
FOR TRYIN'.

WHY, RHODES--WHY WOULD ANYONE DO THIS--
--WHAT COULD THEY POSSIBLY HOPE TO GAIN?!
FIRST...
...I MIGHT BE ABLE TO ANSWER WHO.
WHOLE FLOOR SCANNED FLAT ON MY EARLIER PASS, NO LIFE-SIGNS AT ALL.
I'M THINKIN' ABRAHAM TOOK HIS KILLER DOWN WITH HIM.
ANOTHER BODY...?
WHAT IS THIS PLACE, JIM?
WHY ALL THIS BLOOD OVER ONE STIFF-SUIT'S ABANDONED OFFICE...?!
YOUR OFFICE, TONY.
MY... HIS... OFFICE?
THIS WHOLE STODGY SPREAD IS A STARK COMPLEX--?!
TOO MUCH.


NOW IF YOU FACE THAT FAR WALL LONG ENOUGH FOR RETINA RECOGNITION--
--AND RECITE THE STARK "OPEN SESAME" OF CHOICE...
MALLORY.
...YOU'LL UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT MAN OUTSIDE--THAT GOOD MAN YOU'D CALL A STRANGER--DIED TO PROTECT.
YOUR SECRET, REALLY.
YOUR IDENTITY.
FFSSH
hello Tony.
hello Tony
hello Tony.
YOUR LEGACY.
WHOAA...

HANG ON, TONY!
ONE O' MY ROVER-DRONES IS PICKING UP A POWERFUL HEAT-SIGNATURE, CLOSING FA--
--AAAR!
JIM...!?
DOWN ALREADY.
AS IF HE FELT EVERY BIT OF WHATEVER HAPPENED TO--
KROOM
STOCKPILE HAPPENED, SHELLHEAD.
SUNSTREAK, BRASS, AND JOUST-- MINUS THE LATE, LAMENTED CALICO, O' COURSE--
--ALONG WIT' Y'R OL' CHUM, UNICORN...!
'PEARS WE HAVE SOME CATCHIN' UP T' DO...

HELICON...
PERFECT.
INTERFACE ACCESS TO BRASS IS UP AND RUNNING.
MY CURSED COUSIN'S SYNTHETIC NEURAL NETWORK IS FAR, FAR MORE FUNCTIONAL THAN HE EVER DARED DREAM.
ONCE IT WAS FULLY BIO-INTEGRATED, ALLOWING ME SOME LIMITED MOBILITY FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE "ACCIDENT"...
...IT WAS A SIMPLE ENOUGH MATTER TO CYBER-LINK MY NEW NERVOUS SYSTEM -- THROUGH THE INTERFACE EYES -- TO THE BRASS-BORG.
AND MORGAN STARK WALKS THE WORLD ONCE MORE!
TO BE CONTINUED!

MARVEL®
IRON MAN
AUG '96
331
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THE INVINCIBLE
IRON MAN®
IRON SIEGE
CABRERA 96

RECOGNIZE ME? YOU KNOW, I'M...
THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN
WHAT'S IT THAT THE PAPER CLIPPINGS SAID... OH, YEAH, "THE MAN OF IRON WITH THE HEART OF STEEL."
WELL, THIS IRON SUIT FEELS LIKE IT'S A BAD TOASTER MELTING FAST AND MY HEART FEELS ANYTHING BUT STEEL...
IRON MAN'S GETTING HIS BUTT KICKED ON LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK...
Stan Lee PRESENTS

GOING FOR BROKE

TERRY KAVANAGH PLOT
JAMES FELDER SCRIPT
JOE BENNETT PENCILS
MARK McKENNA INKS
TIM DZON INKS
PHIL FELIX LETTERS
JOHN KALISZ COLORS
MARK GRUENWALD EDITS
BOB HARRAS CHIEF

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I'LL LET YOU IN ON A LITTLE *SECRET* WHILE I TRY TO REROUTE ENOUGH INTERNAL POWER SYSTEMS TO GET MY ARMOR BACK ONLINE--
--YOU PROBABLY KNOW MORE ABOUT "*IRON MAN*" THAN *I* DO.
I'M KIND OF NEW TO THE ARMOR. IN FACT, I'M THINKING RIGHT NOW THAT I'D DO BETTER LEAVING THIS *MESS* TO *SOME OF MY "ELDER SELF'S"* DO-GOODER PALS--
--AND SKEDADDLE BACK TO NEW YORK CITY BEFORE--
--19 YEAR-OLD BOY GENIUS *TONY STARK* FAILS HIS COMPUTER MID-TERM IN SIX HOURS.
HOLD ON, TONY-RONI! I MIGHT BE IN OVER MY HEAD. BUT I GOT TO THINK WHAT'S THE *RIGHT* THING TO DO. PEOPLE ARE COUNTING ON *IRON MAN,* WHETHER OR NOT I'M INTO IT.
THE REMNANTS OF THE *COMPANY MY DEAD FATHER* BUILT UP WITH HIS *SWEAT* AND *TEARS* IS BEING SMASHED UP DOWN THERE BY SOME GUYS CALLED *STOCKPILE.*
AND THAT POOR SECURITY GUY, *ZIMMER.* THEY JUST MURDERED HIM IN COLD BLOOD!
BUTT KICKING AND FAILED EXAMS CAN GO TAKE A FLYING *LEAP!*
C'MON, *CREEPS!* YOU BETTER THINK *TWICE* BEFORE YOU PICK A FIGHT WITH *IRON MAN!*

HEY... THEY JUMPED BACK *QUICK*. I GUESS THIS SARDINE CAN *IS* PRETTY SCARY WHEN IT'S COMING BACK AT YOU AT SUB-SONIC SPEED. COOOOL.
YOU MIGHT BE WONDERING WHAT I MEANT ABOUT MY "ELDER SELF." WELL, YOU SEE, I'M NOT THE ONLY TONY STARK.
I'M FROM TEN YEARS IN THE *PAST*.
IN *YOUR* TIME I GREW TO BE THIS MILLIONAIRE WHO WOULD TAKE THE COMPANY MY POP MADE AND USE IT TO MAKE THIS ARMOR -- THIS *IRON MAN*. BUT *ME* -- *YOUR* TIME'S ME -- WENT BAD.
THIS SUPER-HERO GROUP -- THE *AVENGERS* -- CAME BACK INTO THE PAST TO GET ME TO DEFEAT MYSELF IN THE FUTURE -- *YOUR* PRESENT. *
YARGH!
I DEFEATED HIM -- MYSELF -- BUT *HE* -- NOT REALLY MYSELF -- KILLED MY PARENTS AND PRACTICALLY KILLED ME. THIS ARMOR THAT I COBBLED TOGETHER FROM THE *STARK VAULTS* IS THE ONLY THING THAT KEEPS MY DAMAGED HEART GOING.
* IN THE TIMESLIDE ONE-SHOT!
CONFUSING, HUH? TELL *ME* ABOUT IT -- I'M *LIVING* IT!
AND MY ONLY ALLY TONIGHT IS MY "ELDER SELF'S" OLD FRIEND, *JIM RHODES* -- THE UNCONSCIOUS DO-GOODER OVER THERE SOMETIMES KNOWN AS *WAR MACHINE!*
DOESN'T LOOK LIKE HE'S GOING TO BE MUCH *HELP*...

RIGHT NOW I GOT TO KEEP THESE CREEPS FROM GETTING INTO THE SELF-SAME STARK VAULTS.
IF A GOOFY KID LIKE ME CAN MAKE THIS STAR DESTROYER SUIT OUT OF THE STUFF IN THE VAULT, YOU CAN IMAGINE WHAT THEY'LL DO IF THEY GET IN!
ALL THE OLD IRON MAN ARMORS MY "ELDER SELF" MADE LIE IN THERE -- EVEN I DON'T KNOW WHAT POWERS THE ARMORS HOLD.
BRASS
MOVE BACK, PEOPLE -- NICE AND EASY. I DON'T WANNA HAVE TO GIVE ANYONE A REPULSOR RAY FACIAL!
WE'RE GIVING THE ORDERS HERE, TIN MAN!
YOU CAN'T BEAT US ALL -- YOU CAN'T BEAT THE STOCKPILE!
JOUST
UNICORN
SUNSTREAK
CUTE NAME. WHY DON'T YOU GUYS CUT A RECORD AND TOUR THE PRISONS WITH JOHNNY CASH?
HOPE WE DIDN'T DISTURB YOUR SLEEP, RH-- uh, I MEAN, WAR MACHINE.
YOU READY TO...

URGH!
KRANNGGG
Y'R GOIN' TA BE READY F'R A COFFIN, MATE!
DON'T EVEN THINK OF TRYING TO GET NEAR ME--
--AT LEAST UNTIL I'VE GIVEN YOU A GOOD ZAP OF 60,000 VOLTS!
KZZZZZT
GARRRHHHH

UNICORN'S HORN SHORTING OUT MY SERVO-RELAYS... OH, MAN, I THINK I'M BLACKING OUT...
DON'T WORRY, KID-- I GOT HIM!
UNH... HEART PUMP STILL ONLINE... REPULSOR GENERATORS AT 3%. GOING TO BE THREE MINUTES BEFORE Y DEFENSE ARRAYS REACTIVATE.
GOOD THING MISTER RHODES IS ONLINE.
THAT THING CALLED BRASS-- INFRARED SENSORS PICKING UP TWO-WAY SIGNALS GOING TO IT--LIKE SOMETHING IS COMMUNICATING WITH IT... OR MORE!
COME ON, TONY, THINK! THAT THING'S GONNA MAKE MINCE-MEAT OF MISTER RHODES AND THEN IT'S GOING TO OPEN THIS TIN CAN UP. AT LEAST TWO MINUTES UNTIL MY REPULSOR RAYS WILL BE WORKING!
GONNA ROAST YOU TILL YOU'RE BUBBLY IN THAT ARMOR!
REPULSORS MIGHT NOT BE UP-- BUT I CAN USE THE PRISMATIC MIRROR IN MY CHEST REPULSOR LENS TO DEFLECT SUNSTROKE'S SOLAR LANCE INTO HIS BUDDY AND--
AIIEE!
IT FINALLY SPEAKS! MAN, THAT MUST HURT!

THE PAIN IS NOT FELT IN THE THING CALLED BRASS, BUT BY A TWISTED BODY THREE HUNDRED MILES EAST AND A MILE STRAIGHT DOWN.
HIS NAME IS MORGAN STARK-- THE LONG-THOUGHT DEAD COUSIN OF TONY STARK.
HIS HATRED HAS KEPT HIS MIND GOING ALL THESE YEARS. HIS OBSESSION TO RULE STARK ENTERPRISES HAS BUILT THIS SPIDER-WEB OF SILICON NAMED HELICON AROUND HIM.
THESE FRAGILE, COMPLEX COMPUTER SYSTEMS KEEP ALIVE THE REMNANTS OF THIS MAN.
HIS WILL REACHES THROUGH THE WITHERED BODY, THROUGH THE BLOODY RELAYS, THROUGH THE VERY AETHER OF CYBERSPACE TO CONTROL THE CONSTRUCT BRASS.
AEEEEEEE
THE CONVULSING, SPASTIC THING THAT IS FLEETINGLY MORGAN STARK RIPS FROM THE VERY SYSTEM...
BUT EVEN A HEALTHY MAN'S SANITY WOULD NOT WITHSTAND THE NEURAL FEEDBACK THAT IRON MAN'S BARRAGE CAUSES TO BE RELAYED UNKNOWINGLY BACK THROUGH BRASS.
...THAT KEEPS HIM HOVERING ABOVE DEATH.
NO...
...MORGAN STARK WILL NOT GIVE UP... I WILL NOT...
... BE CONSECRATED TO THIS... GREAT... UNKNOWN...

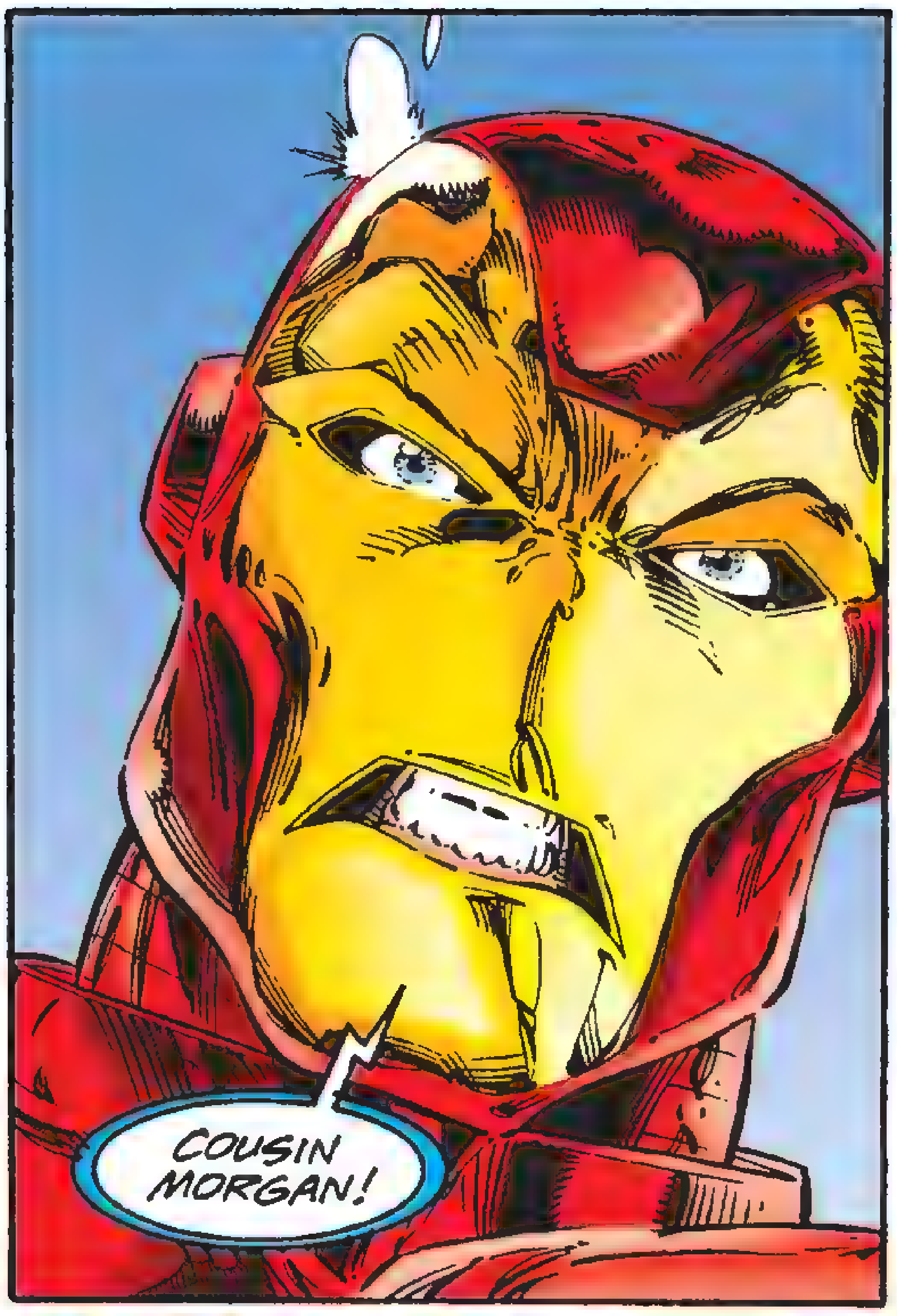
DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO BRASS-- I'M IN CHARGE NOW!
SUNSTROKE-- TAKE IRON MAN. UNICORN-- YOU AND I'LL TAKE THAT THING IN THE WEIRD ARMOR!
MY SOLAR LANCE AT FULL POWER IS HOTTER THAN THE HEART OF A VOLCANO-- FAR PAST THE MELTING POINT OF IRON!
GREAT... SHE'S MOVING THE BEAM TO AVOID MY REPULSOR LENS... ARMOR HEATING UP...
...REPULSORS NOT UP... THREE SECONDS TILL ANCILLARY DEFENSE SYSTEMS ARE UP...
...TWO...
...ONE...
WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO BEAT THAT, IRON MAN?
...ZERO!
ZERO. ABSOLUTE ZERO... A SUSTAINED BAROMETRIC FIELD OF AIR AT -273 DEGREES CELSIUS!
GAK!

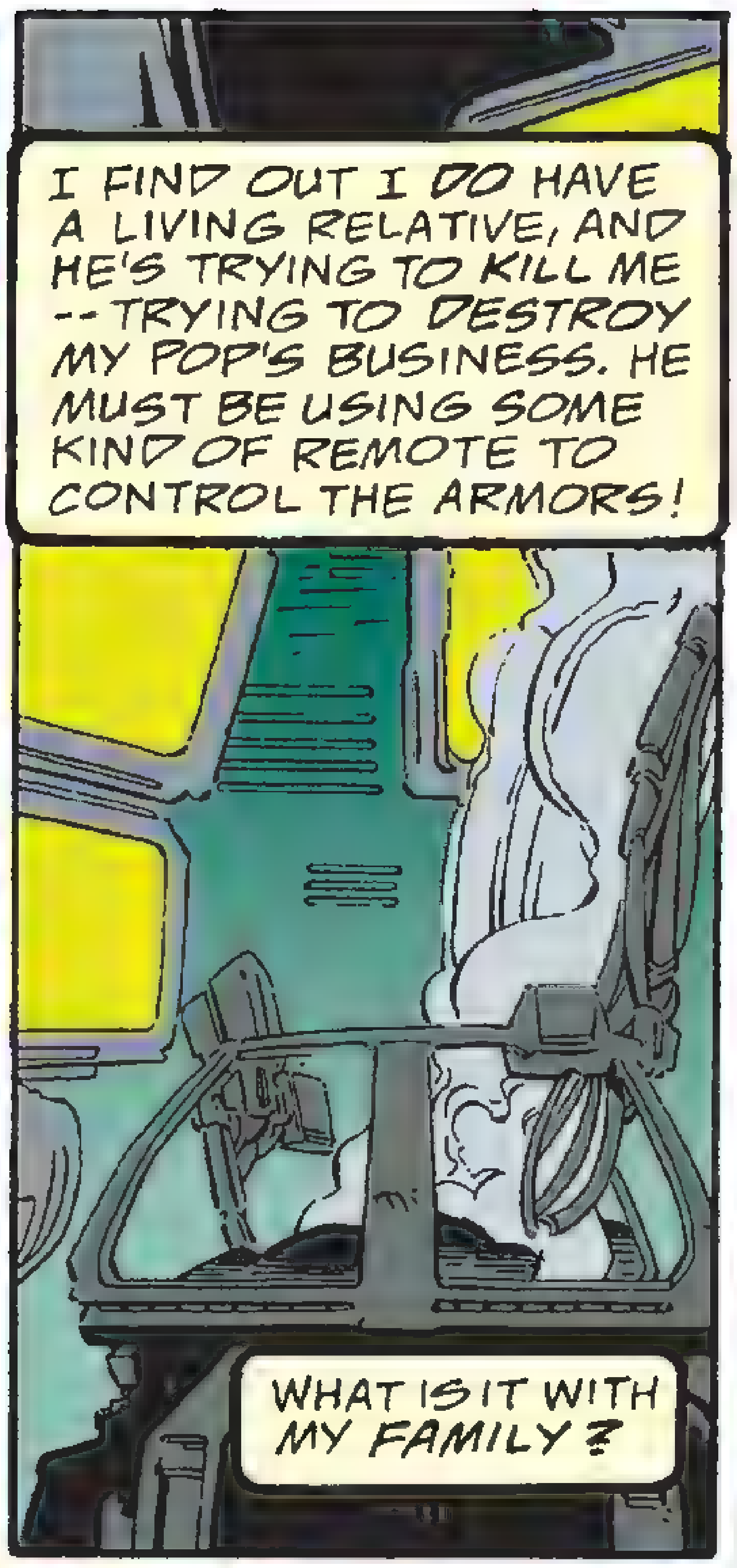
KRACK
THAT'S ONE DOWN FOR THE COUNT...
THE FLOOR!
YARR!!
RACCCHHH
AND NOW JOUST IS DOWN. JUST ONE MORE...
HRRR... HRRR... THERE ONLY SO MUCH BEATIN' I'LL TAKE--AND THEN THERE WILL BE BLOOD T'PAY!
Y'R GOT ME GOOD AN' KNACKERED!!
AND NOW YER GONNA BLEED!

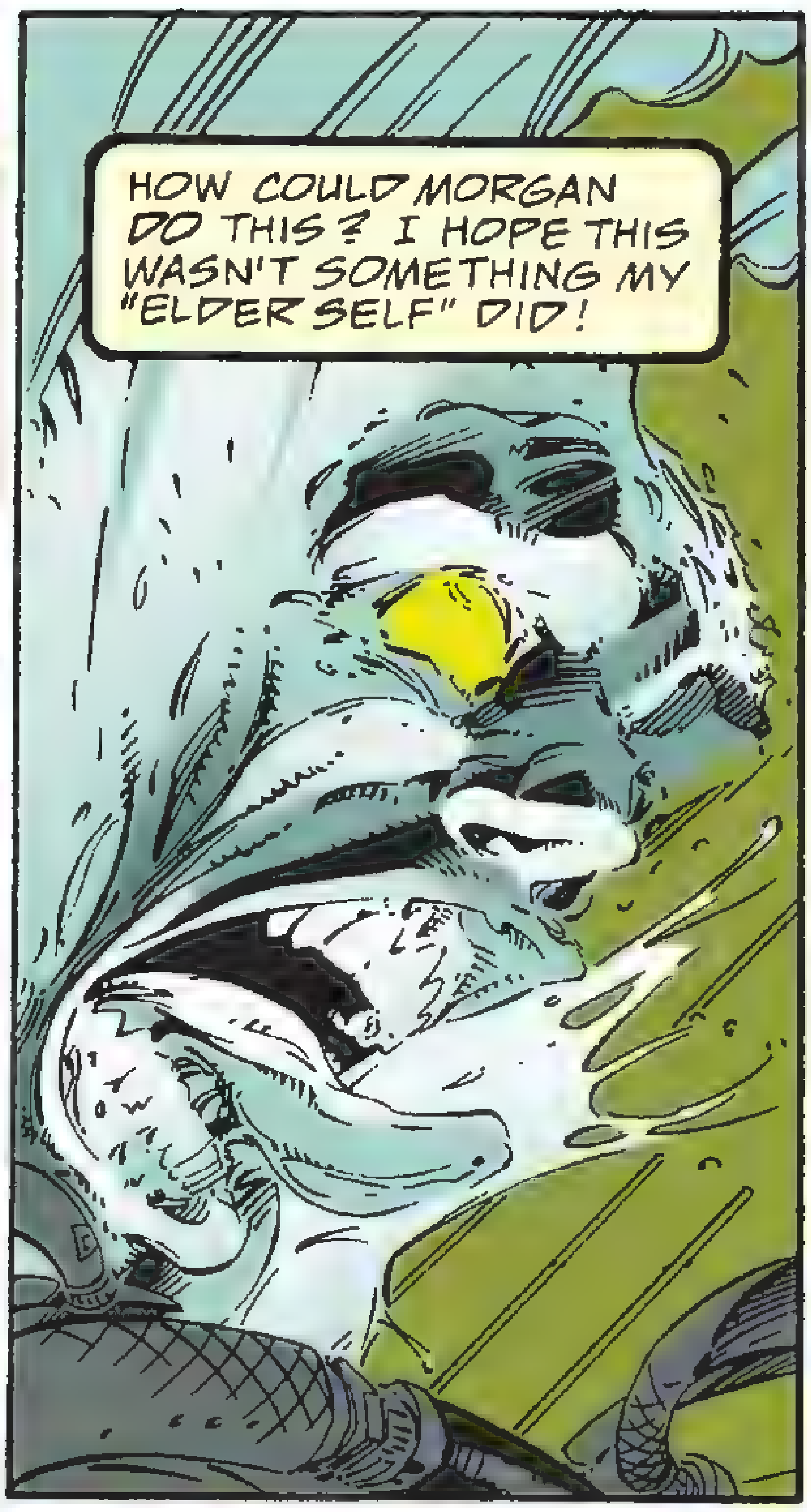
IN HELICON...
A LIGHT... VISION... THROUGH MANY EYES...
...I CAN FEEL THE COLD TOUCH ON MY BRAIN OF... IRON...
IN THE STARK VAULTS...
GARRGGHHH!
COMBINE THE RAYS OF OUR REPULSORS--IT SHOULD STOP HIM!
OR BLOW US BACK TO NEW YORK, KID!
ZZZZRRUMM
I'D TAKE EITHER AT THIS POINT!
IT'S NOT STOPPING HIM--OH, BROTHER...
GOT AN IDEA, MISTER RHODES--
--SAME HERE!

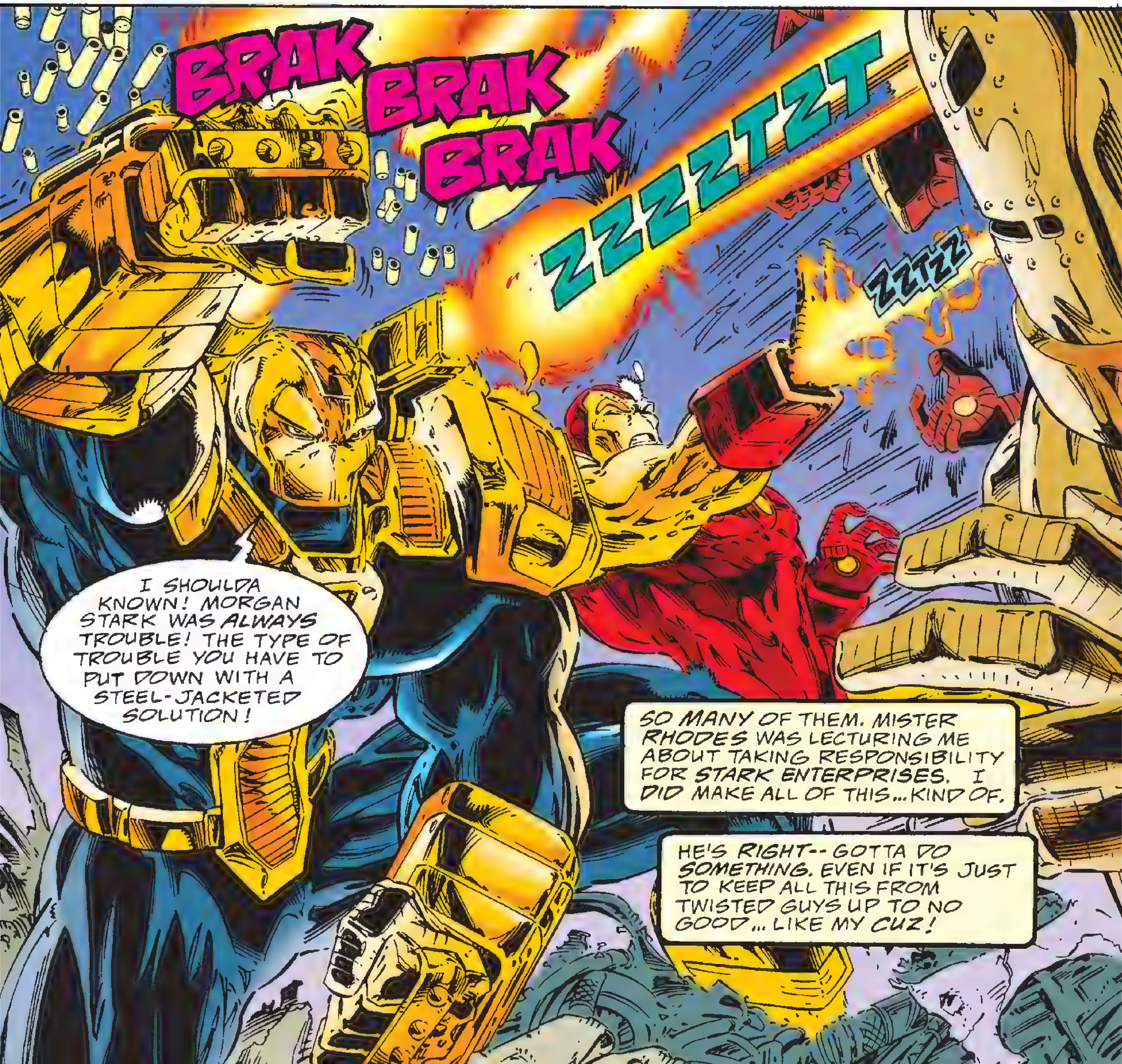
CHHUUCK
ZRATTT
KRA-TANK
LAST ONE DOWN BY A *LITTLE* CREATIVE THINKING AND A *BIG* CHUNK OF CEILING!
MISTER RHODES ALMOST READ MY MIND.
QUICK THINKING BACK THERE--HOW'D YOU *GUESS* WHAT I WAS DOING?
BEEN ON *BOTH* SIDES OF THAT ARMOR. KNOW IT WELL... *TOO* WELL.
YOU AND MY ELDER SELF MUST HAVE BEEN QUITE A *TEAM.*
WE *WERE.* TOOK TURNS IN THAT ARMOR, SAVED EACH OTHER'S BUTTS TOO MANY TIMES. WE WERE PARTNERS --EVEN FRIENDS ... *ONCE.*
HEY, YOUR SENSORS PICKING UP *REMOTE CODES*-- STUFF WE USED TO USE ON THE WEAPONS TESTING RANGE ON THE DRONES?
YEAH, I WAS PICKING THAT UP BEFORE AROUND THAT GUY *BRASS*--DIDN'T KNOW THAT'S WHAT IT WAS. BUT THIS *IS* A HUNDRED TIMES *DENSER*...
...OH, NO...

NO *WAAAY*...
YOU HAVE FAILED, *TONY*. YOUR *FATHER'S DREAM* IS *DEAD!*
STARK ENTERPRISES AND ALL ITS *POWER* IS *MINE!*
IT'S TERRIFYING AND *AMAZING* AT THE SAME TIME. I *KNOW* THESE THINGS. HALF-FORMED THINGS IN MY HEAD-- JUST *DREAMS*. GIVEN TEN YEARS I COULD HAVE CREATED THIS. I *HAVE* CREATED THIS.
AND NOW IT'S JUST A *NIGHTMARE*.
IT'S ALL A *NIGHTMARE*. AND THE *ARMOR'S* THE LEAST OF IT-- 'CAUSE I RECOGNIZE THAT VOICE. IT'S...


COUSIN MORGAN!


I FIND OUT I DO HAVE A LIVING RELATIVE, AND HE'S TRYING TO KILL ME -- TRYING TO DESTROY MY POP'S BUSINESS. HE MUST BE USING SOME KIND OF REMOTE TO CONTROL THE ARMORS!
WHAT IS IT WITH MY FAMILY?


HOW COULD MORGAN DO THIS? I HOPE THIS WASN'T SOMETHING MY "ELDER SELF" DID!


BRAK BRAK BRAK
ZZZZTZT
ZZTZZ
I SHOULDA KNOWN! MORGAN STARK WAS ALWAYS TROUBLE! THE TYPE OF TROUBLE YOU HAVE TO PUT DOWN WITH A STEEL-JACKETED SOLUTION!
SO MANY OF THEM. MISTER RHODES WAS LECTURING ME ABOUT TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR STARK ENTERPRISES. I DID MAKE ALL OF THIS... KIND OF.
HE'S RIGHT-- GOTTA DO SOMETHING. EVEN IF IT'S JUST TO KEEP ALL THIS FROM TWISTED GUYS UP TO NO GOOD... LIKE MY CUZ!

BRZZZT
Unhhh!
KRANG!
THIS COMPANY IS MINE, BOY! THERE WILL BE ONLY ONE STARK STANDING WHEN THIS IS OVER!
YOU'RE NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO BEAT ME--EVEN WITH THE BLACK MAN IN THE STRANGE ARMOR!
PWOOSH!
"BLACK MAN" THIS!
YEAH, DITTO!
SSZZT
SHRANG
BEHIND YOU, BOY! OR DO YOU FORGET THE STEALTH ARMOR YOU DESIGNED?
I'VE JUST POLARIZED OUR ARMORS. IT'S CREATED AN ELECTRO-CHEMICAL BOND BETWEEN US--
--SO I CAN HOLD YOU IN PLACE TO MEET YOUR DEATH!

REROUTING PLASMA RELAYS FROM CHEST REPULSORS TO DORSAL SYSTEMS OR THE ARTILLERY DAMAGE'LL SHUT OFF MY HEART!
BRAK BRAK
SPING SPING SPING
CAN'T TAKE MUCH MORE DIRECT DAMAGE.
HEY, KID, DOWNLINKING TO YOUR TRANSMITTER THE SUB-ATOMIC RESONANCE FREQUENCIES FOR THE SERIES TWO STEALTH ARMORS.
WHAT?
SPLING
NOT "WHAT?"--
--"POW!"
BRA-KOWW!

I WILL DESTROY ALL THAT REMAINS OF MY UNCLE *HOWARD STARK*-- INCLUDING YOU!
OH, BOY...
BAKANG
YOU *CAN'T* DESTROY THE LEGACY OF MY FATHER.
YOU'RE *NOTHING* COMPARED TO HIM!
EVERYBODY THESE LAST FEW WEEKS HAS BEEN TELLING ME *WHO* AND *WHAT TONY STARK* WAS AND IS.
BUT I KNOW WHAT MY FATHER TAUGHT ME-- THE EXAMPLE HE SET WITH *HIMSELF* AND *STARK INDUSTRIES*.
I NEED TO PROTECT WHAT MY *FATHER'S LEGACY* IS, JUST LIKE MISTER RHODES SAID. AND ONLY *I* KNOW FULLY WHAT THAT LEGACY *IS*.
SYSTEMS AT -CHK- 92%... DAMAGE -CHK- PERIPHERAL... WEAPONS UN-CHK- TOUCHED...
YOU DESIGNED THIS -CHK- ARMOR *WELL*, TONY... UN-CHK- FORTUNATELY FOR *YOU!*
MISTER RHODES, LISTEN UP. YOU GAVE ME A GOOD IDEA. I'VE UPLINKED THE RESONANCE CODES FOR ALL THE ARMORS FROM THE *GREY* AND *YELLOW ALPHAS* ON UP FROM THE *ARCHIVES*.
YOU GET *CLEAR* WITH--
UNNHH...
KRANG

KRKSKSK
KID, I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING AND IT'S TOO DANGEROUS!
TONY STARK BUILT THESE MONSTERS...
...AND HE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN DESTROY THEM!
KRACKCK
YOU WERE TELLING ME TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY. I AM.
TRUST ME, MISTER RHODES.
HOO, BOY... I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF I BELIEVE MYSELF ON THIS ONE. I GOTTA BE CRAZY!
THE KID SURE IS TONY-- ONLY MAN I KNOW BRAVE AND STUBBORN ENOUGH TO DO THIS!
NOW WHERE'S THE UNICORN?
ALREADY ESCAPED.

JUST GRAB UP JOUST AND SUNSTREAK--YOU GUYS DON'T DESERVE THIS. GOTTA GET YOU CLEAR SO I CAN COME BACK FOR ONE MORE PERSON.
WE'D BETTER GET OUTTA HERE BEFORE THE FIREWORKS START! GOOD LUCK, TONY!
DIVERTING ALL POWER TO THE REPULSOR GAUNTLETS--EXCEPT FOR THE AUXILIARY HEART PUMP. DON'T KNOW IF KEEPING THE HEART GOING WILL DO MUCH GOOD...
...'CAUSE THE POWER IT'S TAKING TO EMIT THIS SUB-ATOMIC RESONANCE FREQUENCY LEAVES MY ARMOR DEFENSELESS.
Uhn... EVEN THE HEART'S BARELY STEADY... THIS BETTER WORK...
DOESN'T MATTER WHAT HAPPENS NOW.
LET THE MORTAR AND CONCRETE CRUMBLE... LET THE STEEL AND SILICON MELT.
LET THIS ARMOR BE SCATTERED AND STARK ENTERPRISES BE DESTROYED!
PING PING SP-KOW
PING SP-KOW
THIS WASN'T MY POP'S LEGACY. RHODEY IS. THE AVENGERS ARE. ALL THE PEOPLE WHO'VE BEEN HELPED BY STARK OVER THE YEARS ARE. AND MOST OF ALL, I AM.
LET PEOPLE SAY WHAT THEY WANT. LET THEM TEAR ME DOWN. I KNOW WHO I AM...
NOW AND FOREVER, I AM--

--TONY STARK!
IT ENDS NOW, BOY!
NOT LIKE YOU THINK. I'M SORRY, MORGAN... SORRY FOR ALL OF THIS... THAT IT CAME TO THIS.
WHAT?! WHAT'S HAPPENING?!
THE REMOTES HAVE BEEN TAKEN OVER BY ME-- THE SELF-DESTRUCTS ARE ARMED.
NOOOOOOOO! EVERYTHING IS GOING BLACK... SO COLD--
SORRY, COUSIN.
DON'T KNOW IF THE KID MADE IT, ABE.
BUT HE RADIOED ME TO SAY HE WANTED TO MAKE SURE YOU GOT A GOOD BURIAL.
YOU KNOW HE'D WANT THAT... TONY ALWAYS HAD A GOOD HEART. ALWAYS.
KRAK
OOMM

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK CITY... FOUR AND A HALF HOURS LATER...
Hahaha! OKAY! OKAY! MAYBE I'LL CALL ALASKA ON THE PHONE BILL!
MMMMM YUM, YUM.
NO, NO, NO. HAVEN'T YOU HEARD? SHE'S BEEN IN THE HOSPITAL.
SOME MUTIE BURNED HER ALIVE OR SOMETHING.
NO WAY! YOU THINK THEY MIGHT CANCEL THE EXAM?
WELL, EXCUUUSE ME, CHAP!
YEAH.
REMI, WHAT'S GOING ON BETWEEN YOU AND THAT CUTE GUY, TONY..?
HE'S HOT-- BUT HE LOOKS LIKE HE'S READY FOR THE JUNIOR PROM!
MMMM... HEY, REMI, I GOT PASSES AT THE STUDENT CENTER FOR THE PAMELA ANDERSON MOVIE. IT'S KINDA LIKE AN ARTY--
I'D RATHER EAT HANG-NAILS FRIED!
BLEEDING MY SAVINGS DRY-- UP TO MY CHIN IN LOANS-- WASHING DISHES-- TO GET MY HIGHER EDUCATION WITH THE DREGS OF MY "GENERATION"!..

SUPER... LET ME JUST GET MY NAIL-CLIPPER...
I'M REALLY HITTING A HOME RUN TODAY.
AW, C'MON, NOT BRENNAN-- WHAT DO I DO TO ATTRACT TROUBLE?
HEY, UH, CHAP... I JUST WANTED TO APOLOGIZE ABOUT THAT FRISBEE THING LAST WEEK.* SOMETIMES I CAN BE A REAL JERK.
NO HARD FEELINGS?
WHAT? OH? SURE. YEAH.
* SEE ISSUE #326.
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT-- I ACTUALLY MADE IT ONE MINUTE EARLY. JARVIS WON'T BELIEVE IT!
TONY STARK!
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
OH, NOTHING... IT'S, UM... JUST YOU KNOW...
I CAN GUESS, ROMEO. NOW JUST SIT YOURSELF IN FRONT WHERE YOU CAN SPREAD YOUR FEET OUT AND I'LL MAKE SURE...
LET ME JUST GET A SEAT IN BACK WHERE I CAN FADE INTO THE BACKGROUND...
YOU SEE, THE TEACHER IS A GIRLFRIEND OF MINE FROM TEN YEARS PAST. CAN'T EXACTLY EXPLAIN TO HER I'VE TIME TRAVELED.
AND TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, SHE WAS INJURED IN A BATTLE IRON MAN HAD WITH HER EX-HUSBAND THIS WEEKEND.* CRAZY, HUH?
* SEE ISSUES #327-328.
NOW I JUST HAVE TO KEEP HER FROM RECOGNIZING ME-- WHICH SHOULDN'T BE SO HARD CONSIDERING...

YOU SEE WHY IT WOULD BE HARD FOR PROFESSOR MEREDITH MCCALL ALDEN TO RECOGNIZE ME IN HER CURRENT CONDITION.
STILL MAKES ME QUEASY TO SEE HER LIKE THIS.
CLASS! SETTLE DOWN! WE HAVE A MID-TERM TO GET THROUGH AND YOU'LL BE LUCKY TO COMPLETE IT BY PERIOD'S END!
THE WAY TONY'S LOOKING AT THE PROFESSOR ...IT JUST COULDN'T BE...
...THAT JERK FELL FOR IT-- HOOK, LINE AND SINKER!
WhhiRRRR
THAT BRIGHT LIGHT!
OUT-SIDE THE WINDOW!
Wh-What the--?
I DIDN'T CREATE THAT THING -- THE DESIGN ISN'T SOMETHING MY ELDER SELF COULD HAVE CONSTRUCTED, I THINK. BUT I CAN TELL WITH ARMAMENTS LIKE THAT, IT MEANS TEN-MEGATON TROUBLE!
AND TROUBLE IT IS! THE SENTINELS HAVE LANDED IN NEW YORK-- AND LEADING THEM IS -- ONSLAUGHT! WHO AND WHAT IS HE? CHECK OUT AVENGERS #401 AND X-MEN #55, THEN BE BACK HERE IN 30 DAYS FOR THE END OF IRON MAN AS WE KNOW IT!!

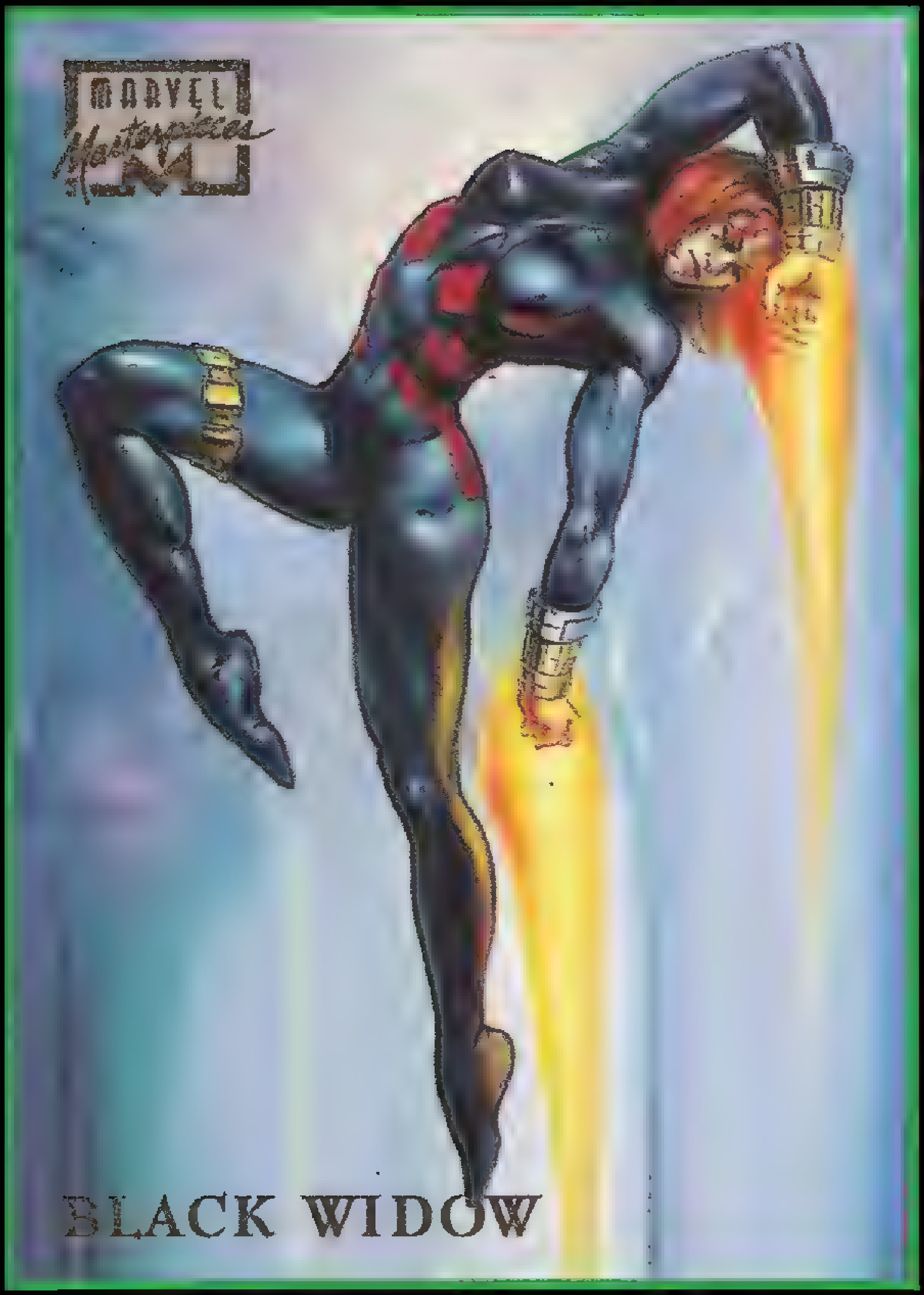
THE ORIGINAL AVENGERS
ARE BACK
BUT SO ARE
THE ZODIAC.
J.P. LEON
"FIRST SIGN"
BEGINNING THIS
JANUARY
in the pages of
AVENGERS
CAPTAIN AMERICA
IRON MAN
THOR
TM & © 1996 MARVEL CHARACTERS INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

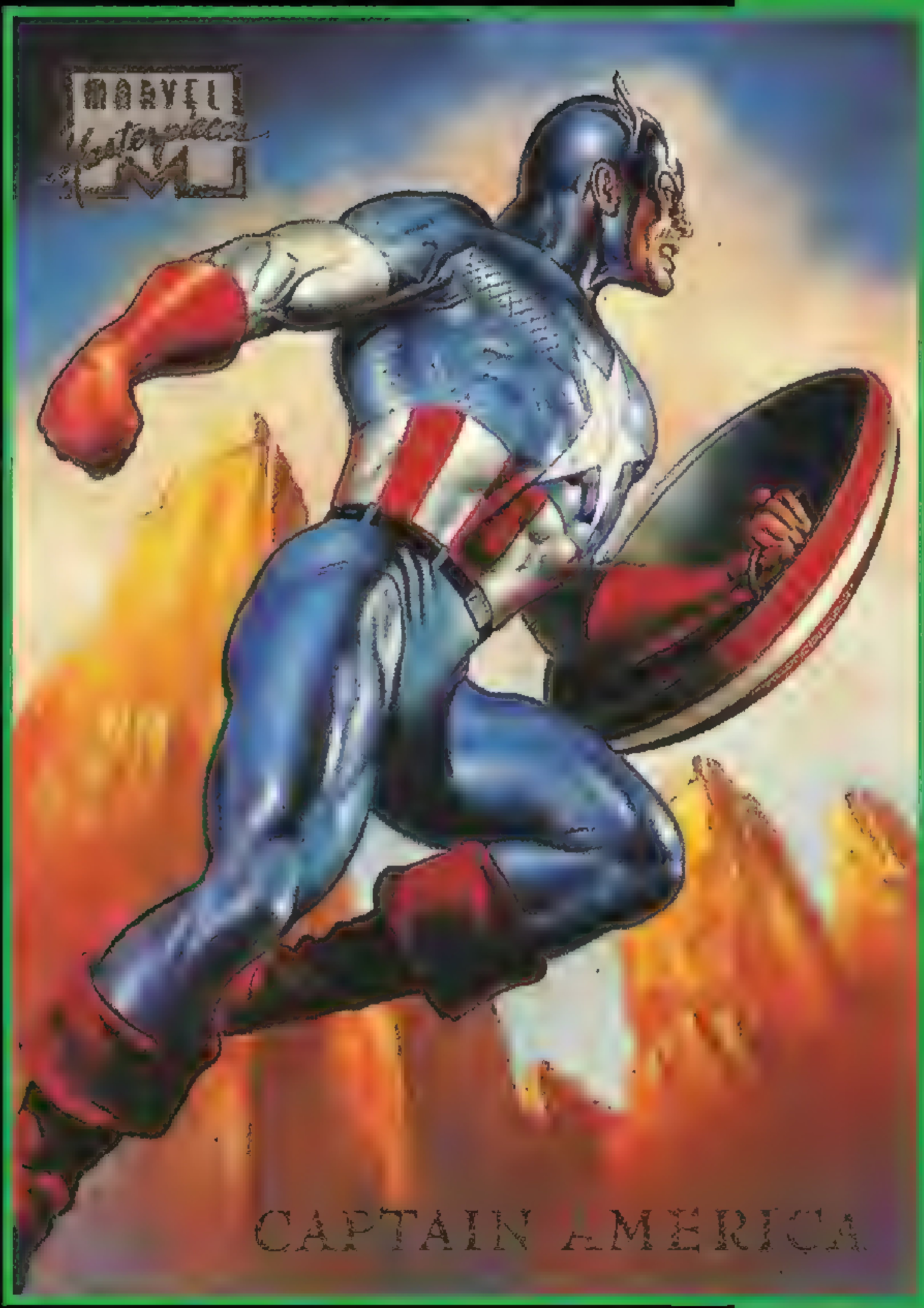
"First Sign" house ad by John Paul Leon

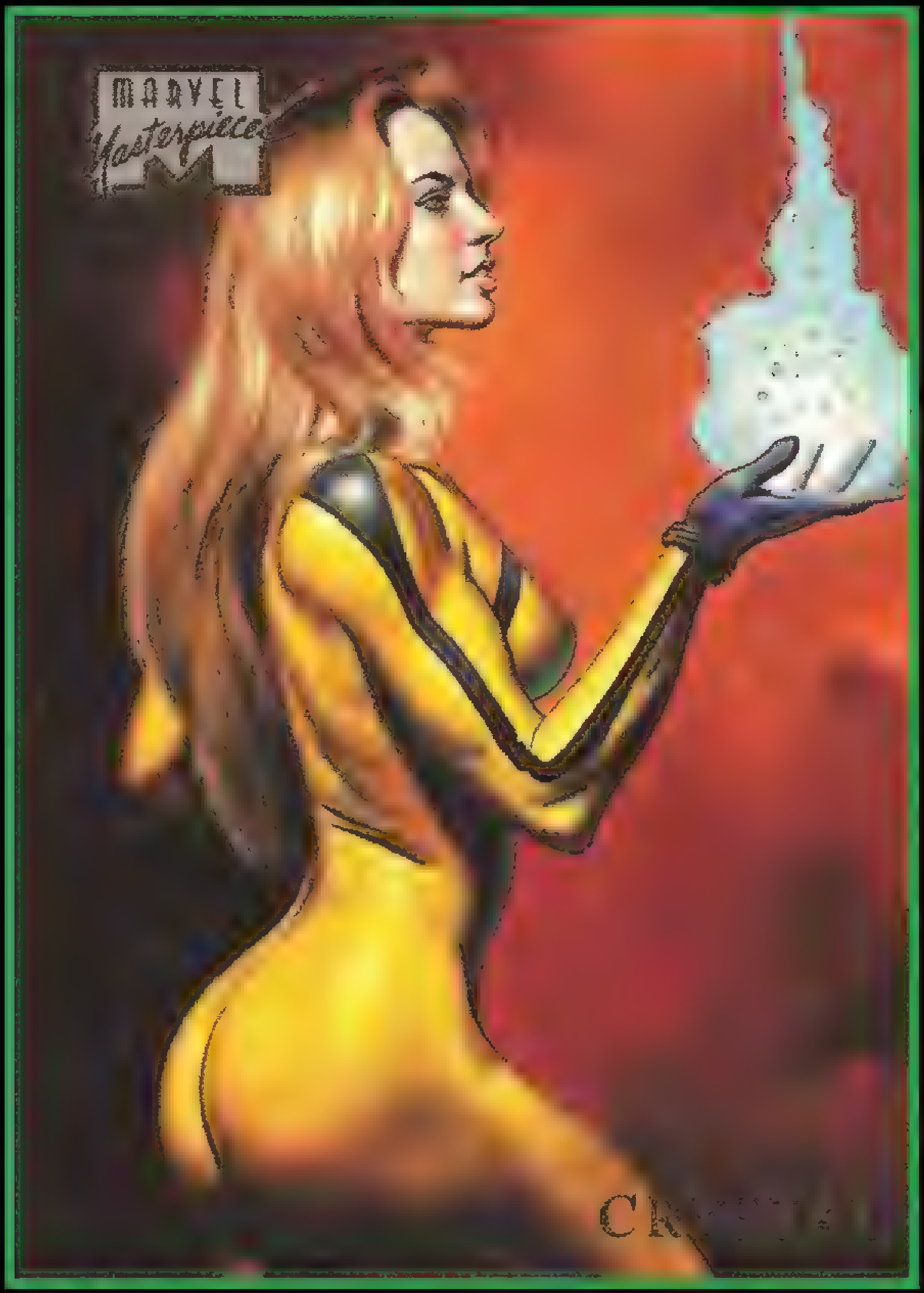
Iron Man house ad by Dave Hoover

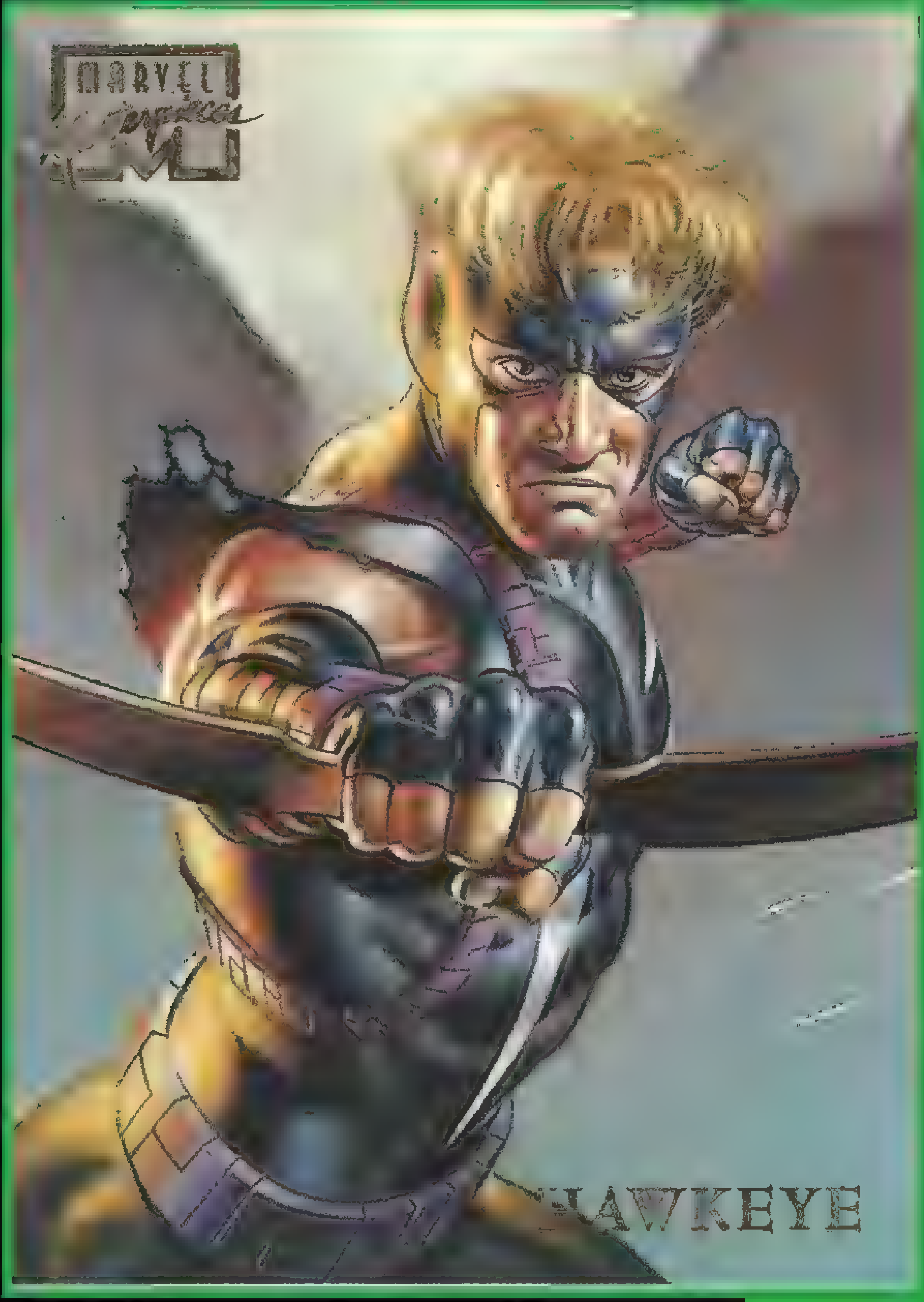
AM I DESTINED TO BETRAY MY FRIENDS JUST AS I WAS FATED TO WEAR THIS ARMOR?
IRON MAN
MARVEL COMICS

Marvel Masterpieces 1996 trading-card art by Boris Vallejo & Julie Bell

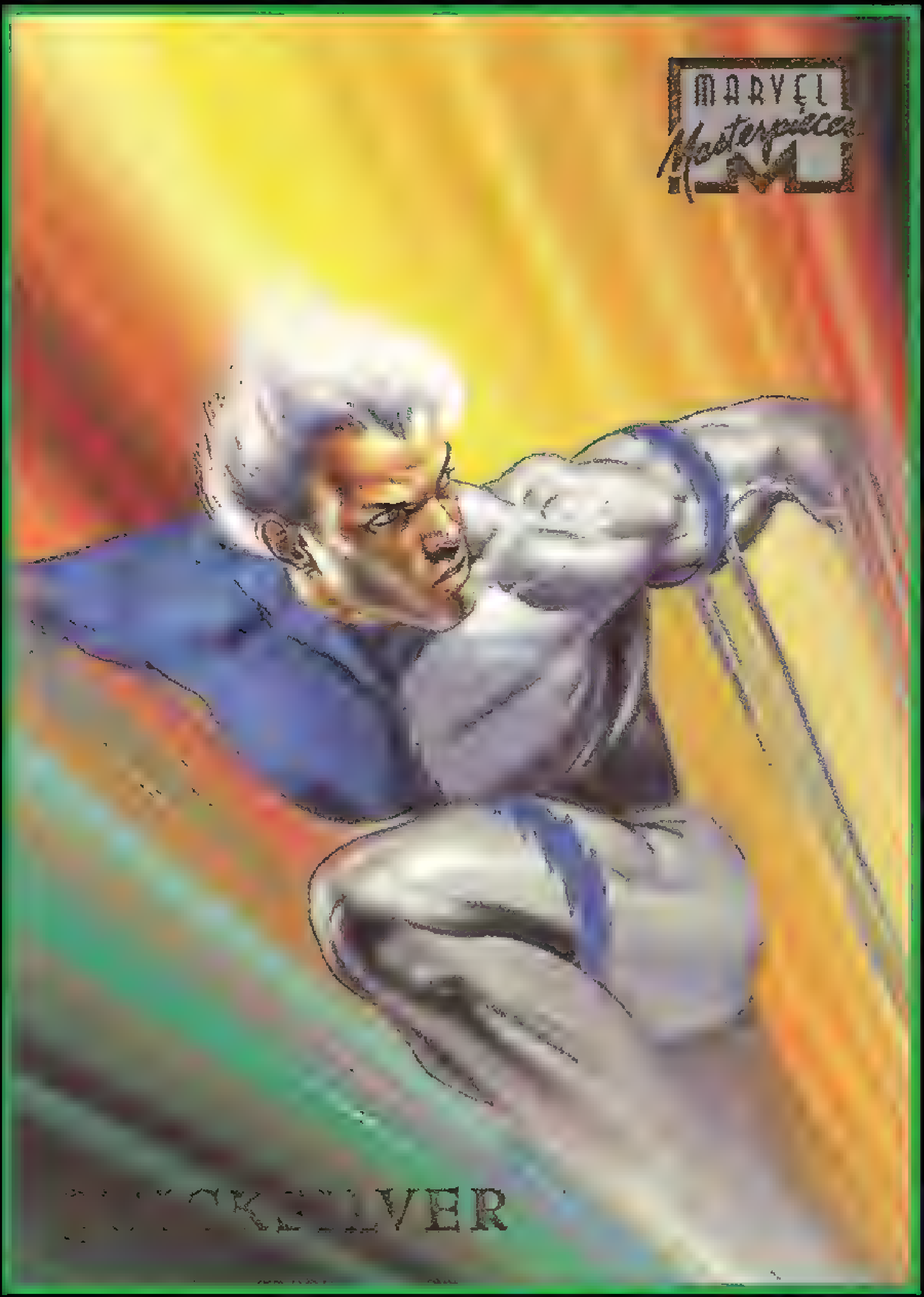

MARVEL
Masterpieces
BLACK WIDOW


MARVEL
Masterpieces
CAPTAIN AMERICA


MARVEL
Masterpieces
CR


MARVEL
Masterpieces
HAWKEYE

Marvel Masterpieces 1996 trading-card art by Boris Vallejo & Julie Bell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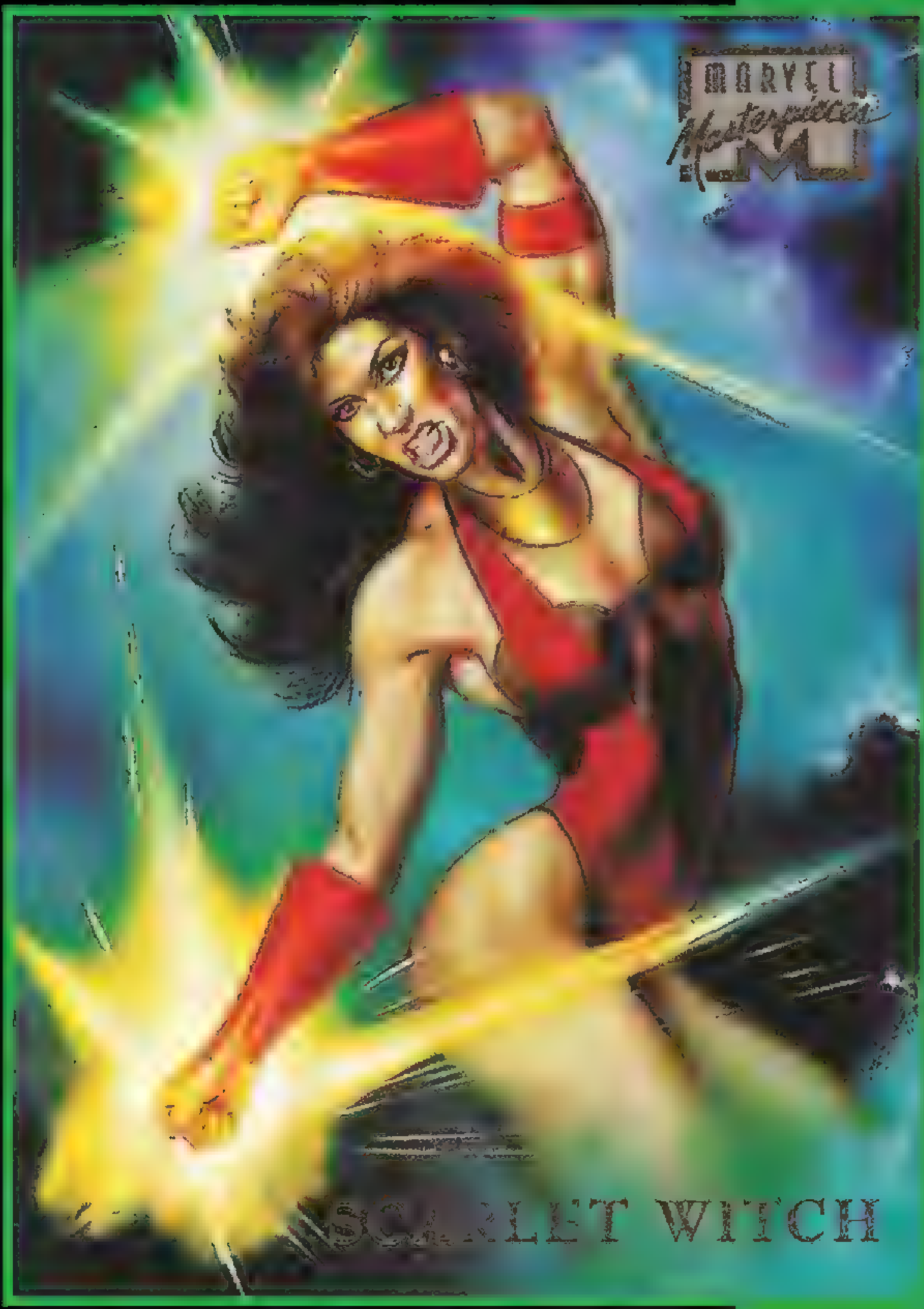
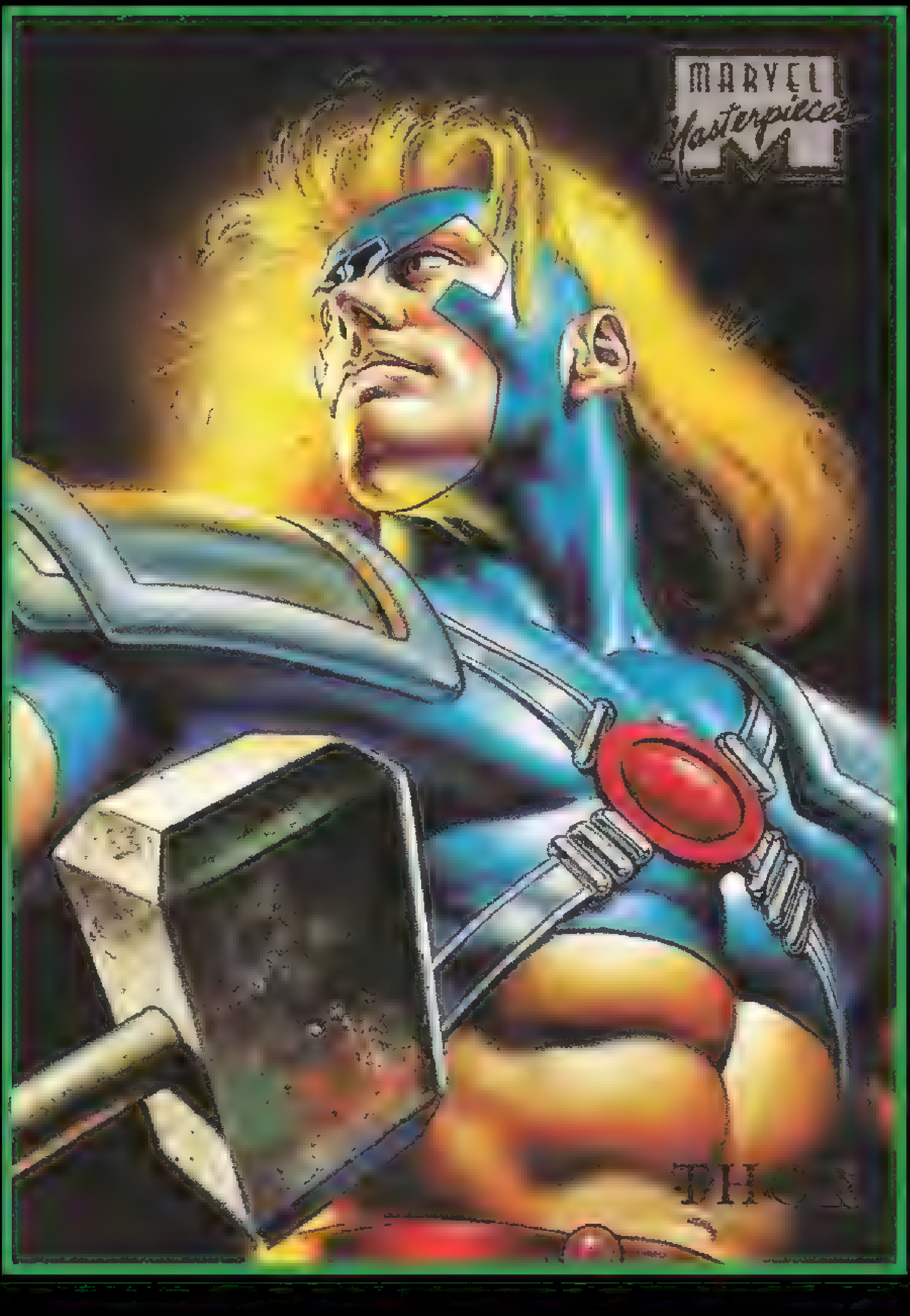
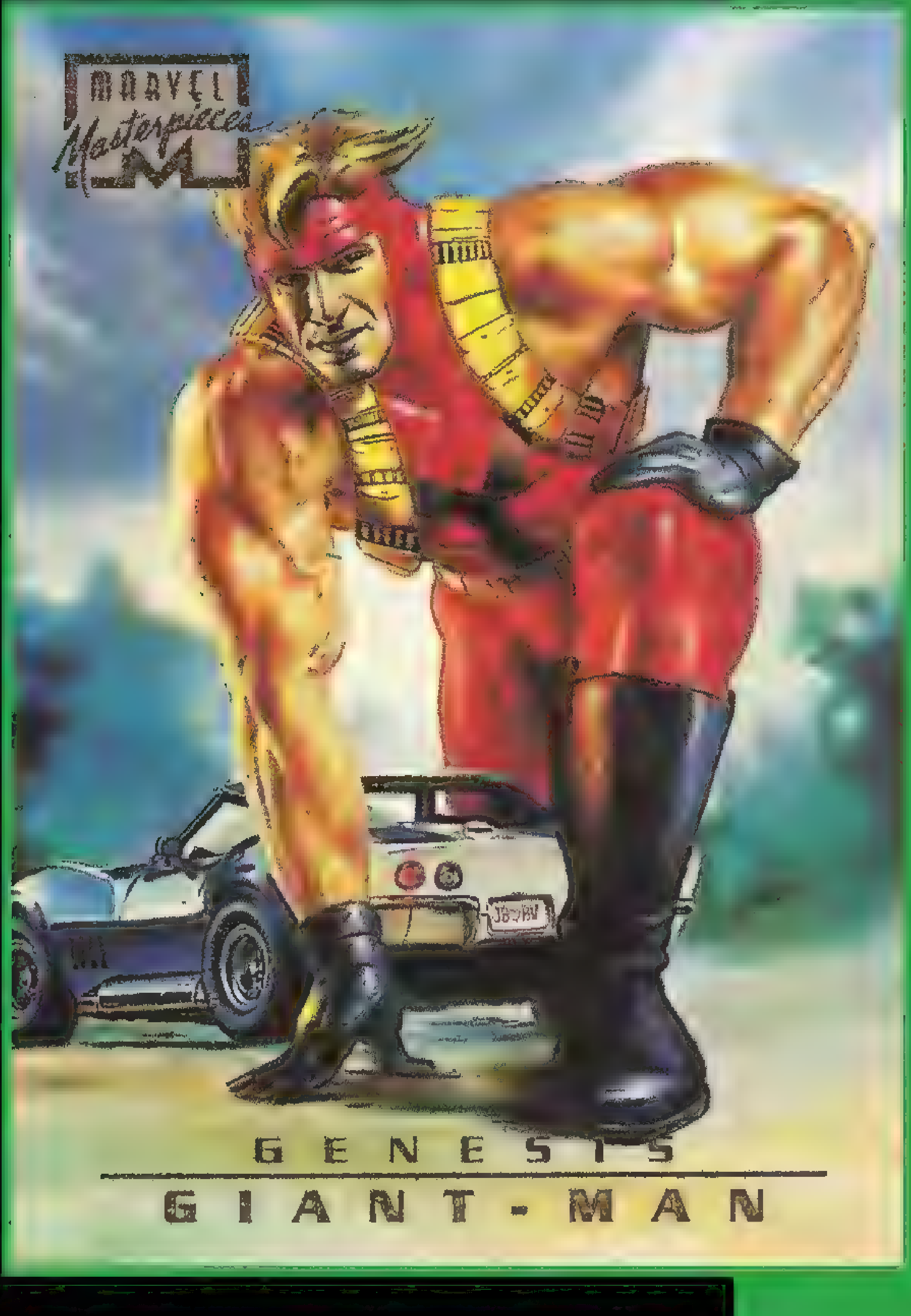
QUICKSILVER

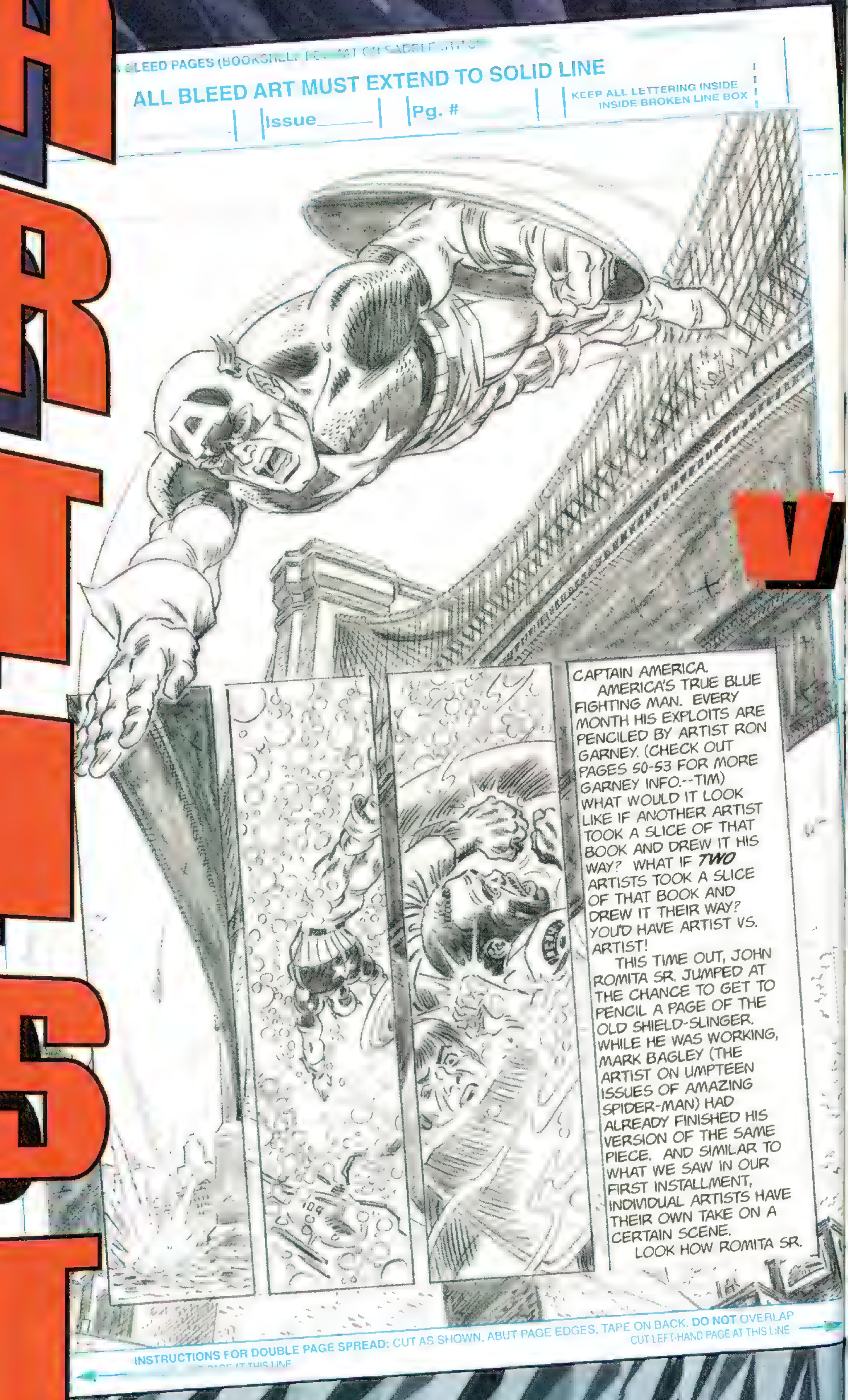

MARVEL
Masterpieces
SCARLET WITCH


MARVEL
Masterpieces
THOR


MARVEL
Masterpieces
GENESIS
GIANT-MAN

Marvel Vision #3 re-imagines *Captain America #449*, page 11.

ARTIST VS ARTIST

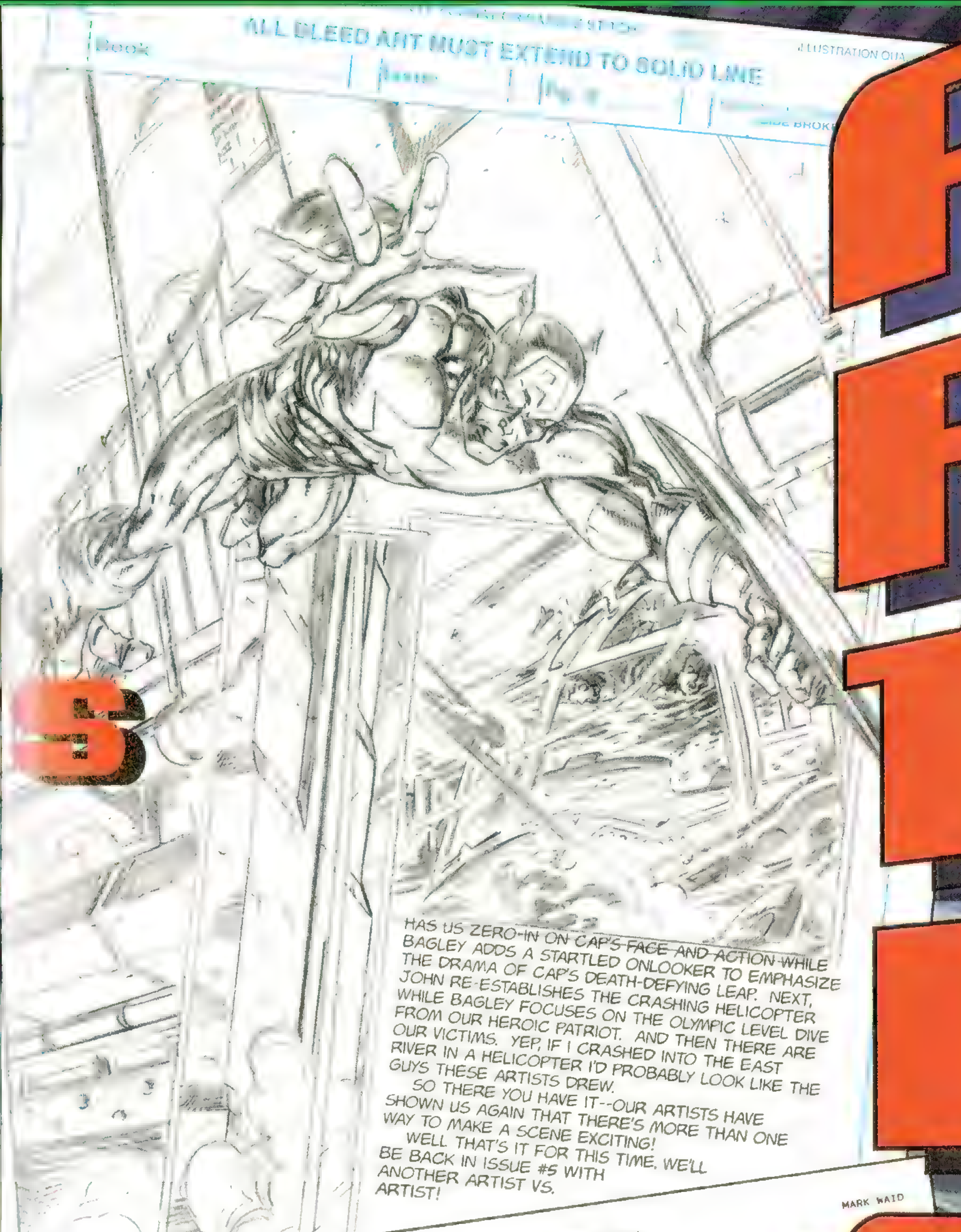

ALL BLEED ART MUST EXTEND TO SOLID LINE
Issue
Pg. #
KEEP ALL LETTERING INSIDE INSIDE BROKEN LINE BOX
INSTRUCTIONS FOR DOUBLE PAGE SPREAD: CUT AS SHOWN, ABUT PAGE EDGES, TAPE ON BACK. DO NOT OVERLAP
CUT LEFT-HAND PAGE AT THIS LINE

CAPTAIN AMERICA.

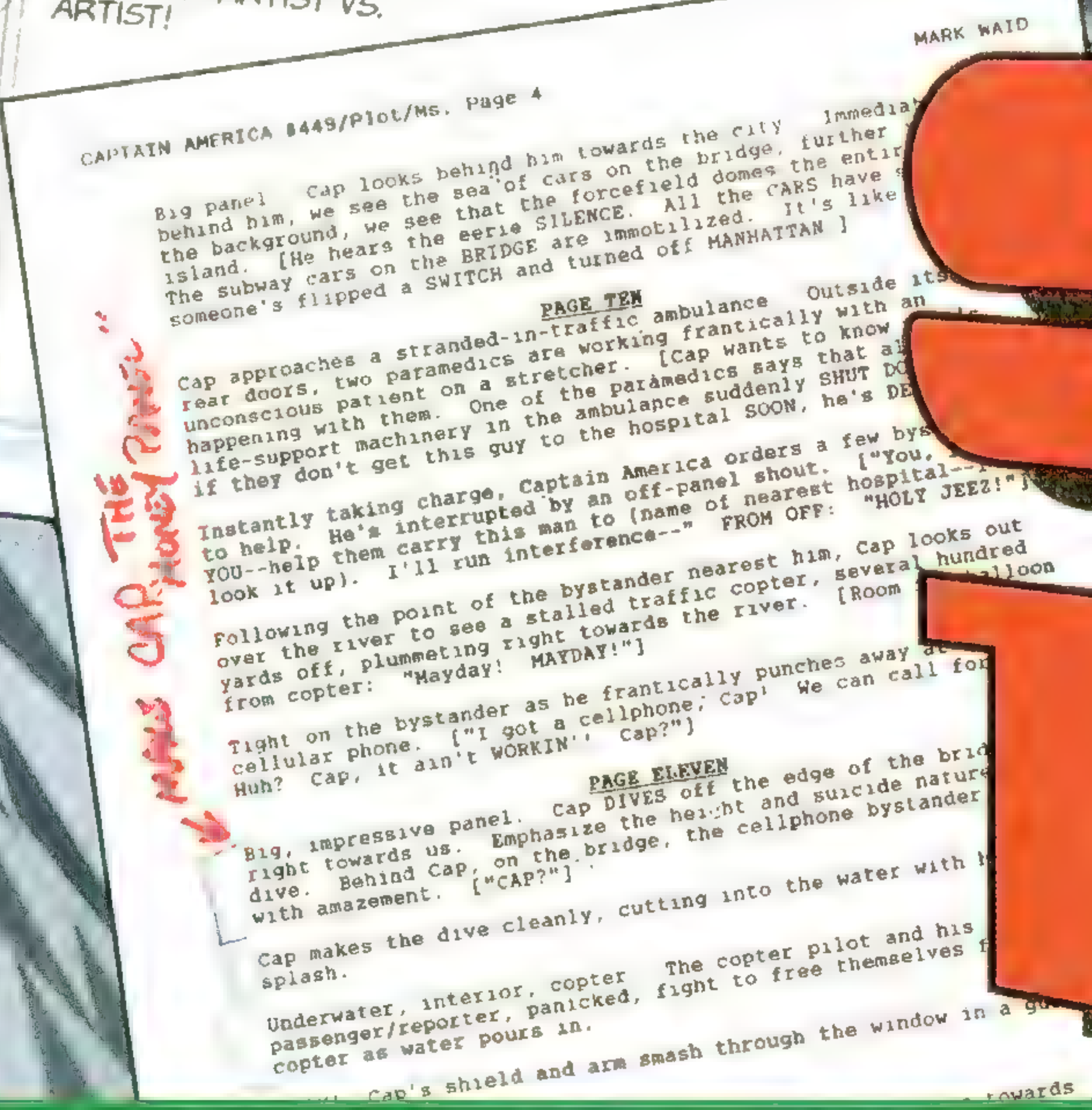
AMERICA'S TRUE BLUE FIGHTING MAN. EVERY MONTH HIS EXPLOITS ARE PENCILED BY ARTIST RON GARNEY. (CHECK OUT PAGES 50-53 FOR MORE GARNEY INFO.--TIM) WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE IF ANOTHER ARTIST TOOK A SLICE OF THAT BOOK AND DREW IT HIS WAY? WHAT IF *TWO* ARTISTS TOOK A SLICE OF THAT BOOK AND DREW IT THEIR WAY? YOU'D HAVE ARTIST VS. ARTIST!

THIS TIME OUT, JOHN ROMITA SR. JUMPED AT THE CHANCE TO GET TO PENCIL A PAGE OF THE OLD SHIELD-SLINGER. WHILE HE WAS WORKING, MARK BAGLEY (THE ARTIST ON UMPTEEN ISSUES OF AMAZING SPIDER-MAN) HAD ALREADY FINISHED HIS VERSION OF THE SAME PIECE. AND SIMILAR TO WHAT WE SAW IN OUR FIRST INSTALLMENT, INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS HAVE THEIR OWN TAKE ON A CERTAIN SCENE.

LOOK HOW ROMITA SR.


ALL BLEED ART MUST EXTEND TO SOLID LINE
Book
Issue
Pg. #

HAS US ZERO-IN ON CAP'S FACE AND ACTION WHILE
BAGLEY ADDS A STARTLED ONLOOKER TO EMPHASIZE
THE DRAMA OF CAP'S DEATH-DEFYING LEAP. NEXT,
JOHN RE-ESTABLISHES THE CRASHING HELICOPTER
WHILE BAGLEY FOCUSES ON THE OLYMPIC LEVEL DIVE
FROM OUR HEROIC PATRIOT. AND THEN THERE ARE
OUR VICTIMS. YEP, IF I CRASHED INTO THE EAST
RIVER IN A HELICOPTER I'D PROBABLY LOOK LIKE THE
GUYS THESE ARTISTS DREW.
SO THERE YOU HAVE IT--OUR ARTISTS HAVE
SHOWN US AGAIN THAT THERE'S MORE THAN ONE
WAY TO MAKE A SCENE EXCITING!
WELL THAT'S IT FOR THIS TIME. WE'LL
BE BACK IN ISSUE #5 WITH
ANOTHER ARTIST VS.
ARTIST!



MARK WAID

CAPTAIN AMERICA #449/Plot/Ms. page 4

Big panel. Cap looks behind him towards the city. Immedia
behind him, we see the sea of cars on the bridge, further
the background, we see that the forcefield domes the entir
island. [He hears the eerie SILENCE. All the CARS have
The subway cars on the BRIDGE are immobilized. It's like
someone's flipped a SWITCH and turned off MANHATTAN.]

PAGE TEN

Cap approaches a stranded-in-traffic ambulance. Outside its
rear doors, two paramedics are working frantically with an
unconscious patient on a stretcher. [Cap wants to know
happening with them. One of the paramedics says that a
life-support machinery in the ambulance suddenly SHUT DO
if they don't get this guy to the hospital SOON, he's DE

Instantly taking charge, Captain America orders a few bys
to help. He's interrupted by an off-panel shout. ["You,
YOU--help them carry this man to (name of nearest hospital--
look it up). I'll run interference--" FROM OFF: "HOLY JEEZ!"]

Following the point of the bystander nearest him, Cap looks out
over the river to see a stalled traffic copter, several hundred
yards off, plummeting right towards the river. [Room balloon
from copter: "Mayday! MAYDAY!"]

Tight on the bystander as he frantically punches away at
cellular phone. ["I got a cellphone, Cap! We can call fo
Huh? Cap, it ain't WORKIN'! Cap?"]

PAGE ELEVEN

MAKE CAP THE "MONEY PANEL"

Big, impressive panel. Cap DIVES off the edge of the brid
right towards us. Emphasize the height and suicide nature
dive. Behind Cap, on the bridge, the cellphone bystander
with amazement. ["CAP?"]

Cap makes the dive cleanly, cutting into the water with
splash.

Underwater, interior, copter. The copter pilot and his
passenger/reporter, panicked, fight to free themselves f
copter as water pours in.

Cap's shield and arm smash through the window in a g
towards

Marvel Vision #4 interview by Mike Marts

THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN

terry KAVANAGH

IRON MAN is quickly catching the eye of many new readers and making it the most talked about book since GENERATION X. The reason is obvious: there's a new man beneath the armor. What's so big about that, you say? Been there? Done that? Well, the most peculiar thing about the new man behind the mask is that he isn't quite a man at all. He's a nineteen-year-old. What's even more peculiar is that he isn't new, either. He's Tony Stark. A little bit confused? Don't be. Marvel VISION recently had a chance to chat with the driving force of the outfit, the real man behind the mask, writer Terry Kavanagh, to get the inside scoop.

Marvel VISION: To clear things up a bit, why not fill us in on the events that led to recreating a new Iron Man?

Terry: First off, I want to say that this isn't exactly a new Iron Man. It's still Tony Stark, the same character that we've known and loved for years. The difference is, this is a Tony from years past, one prior to the formation of Iron Man.

MV How did you pull that off?

TK Near the climax of AVENGERS: THE CROSSING, the Avengers were essentially fighting their greatest battle ever, against their former friend, Tony Stark, aka Iron Man. What they needed was a weapon powerful enough to defeat Tony. So the assembled group of AVENGERS writers and editors decided what more powerful a weapon is there to use against a person, but himself? So in AVENGERS. TIMESLIDE, Captain America, Jarvis, and several other Avengers make the jump back in time to retrieve a more innocent, pure Tony Stark, before his corruption at the hands of Kang, which happened way back around AVENGERS #8.

MV Thereby freeing Tony of his evil, darker side?

TK Right. And after making the jump back into present time, they successfully defeated the older, corrupt Tony Stark in AVENGERS #395, where he ends up dying. But there was a price. During the battle, where young faced old, the older Tony ripped out the teenage Tony's heart; this event parallels the heart damage that Tony originally sustained just before becoming Iron Man in TALES OF SUSPENSE #39. Luckily, young Tony went through a delicate operation in AGE OF INNOCENCE: THE REBIRTH OF IRON MAN and lived. And now, the Marvel Universe has a Tony Stark—like before—but a version of him none of us are used to.

MV So why the big change? If you're going to create a new Iron Man, why have it be the same guy? Why not start from scratch?

TK The character of Tony Stark wasn't the problem. It was all the excess baggage that a character tends to accumulate over the years. We didn't want to just get rid of Tony Stark, a character with such a rich history and one we all cherished so much. What we wanted was to relieve Tony of all the excess baggage, and at the same time make the character more accessible to our rapidly changing audience. Hence, the nineteen-year-old. A character which hopefully many of our readers will relate to.

MV So now you have a more accessible character, a dynamic story change, and a solution to the problem of how to defeat the older corrupt Stark?

TK Yeah, a plot device so clever, we could kill several birds with one big stone of iron.

MV This new direction will probably create some big dilemmas for young Tony?

TK IRON MAN will now deal with the repercussions of what happens when a nineteen-year-old boy finds himself flung into the future—a future where his older self was not only a multimillion dollar inventor and industrialist, but also an Avenging super hero named Iron Man.

MV What's the first step?

TK Since Tony's nineteen, our first step is to get Tony into college—Columbia University, in fact. We wanted to keep him in NYC for a while. At Columbia we'll witness all the usual things a young guy experiences in college . . . frat parties, tough professors . . . girls. What kind of messes he'll get into is anybody's guess.

MV How will the Avengers explain the sudden disappearance of Tony Stark and Iron Man plus the simultaneous appearance of a younger Tony Stark?

TK A press release by Stark Enterprises will reveal to the media that Tony Stark was, in fact, Iron Man and that he recently died in battle. People had been speculating for years that Iron Man and Stark were one and the same—now they'll know for sure. As for a nineteen-year-old going under the same name—what's so weird about that? There are plenty of people around the world with the same name. Why can't there be two Tony Starks?

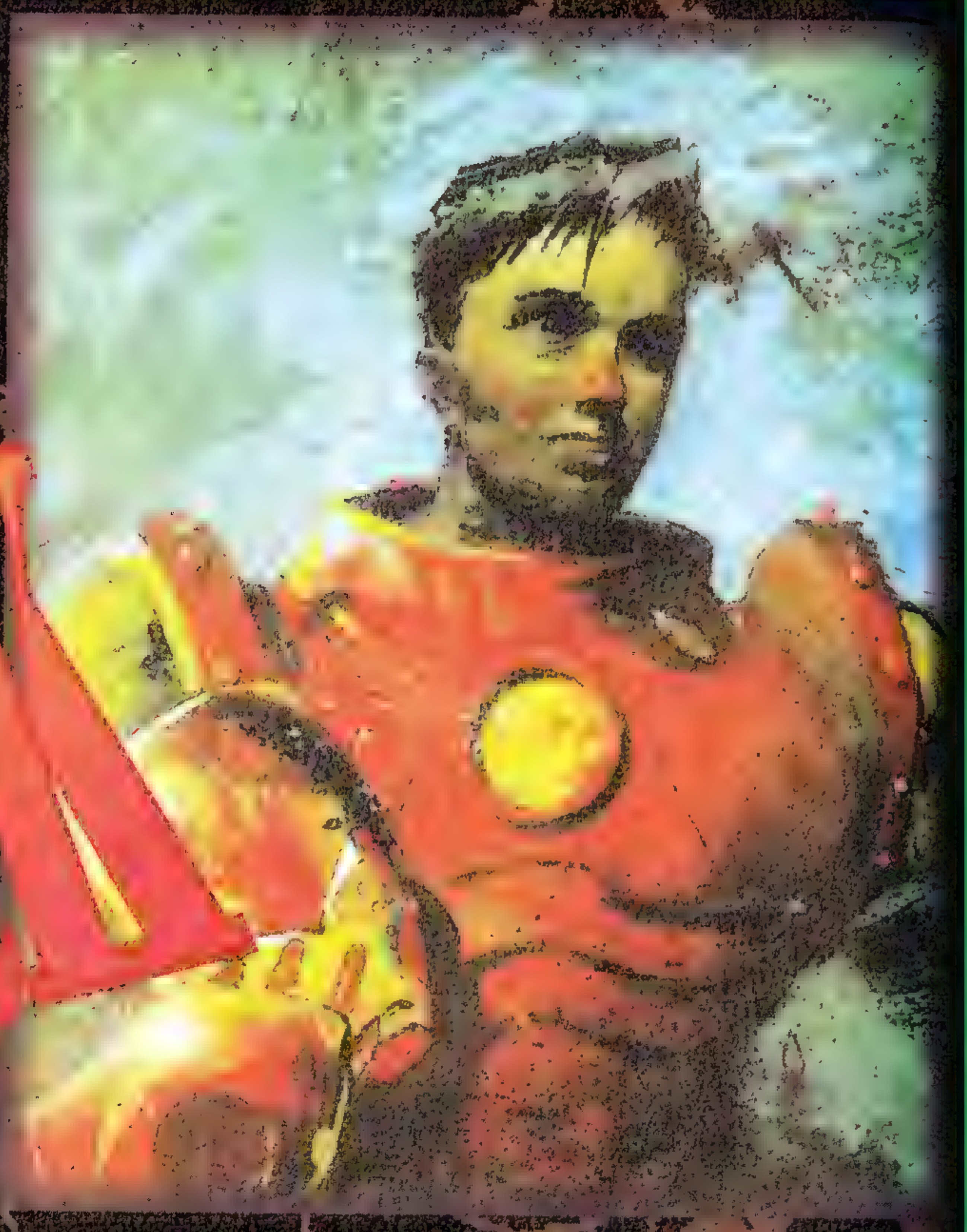
MV What about Tony's company, Stark Enterprises? If people believe Tony Stark to be dead . . . ?

TK The fate of Stark Enterprises is up for grabs right now. It will probably end up being run by a board of directors for a while, until a time when young Tony can figure out what to do with it. Though I wouldn't be surprised if some greedy relative tries to wrest control.

MV Sounds ominous. Why not tell us who else is working on the book with you?

TK Joining me on IRON MAN every month will be Jimmy Cheung, the talented British artist who's been working on the book since issue #322. Jimmy was a goldmine of inspiration in establishing the

TONY STARK!



definitive new look for the younger Tony. He's perfectly captured the essence of the character in the way he looks, dresses and reacts visually. The cast of characters he designed is also right on the money. Mark McKenna handles the inks, John Kalisz colors the book and Phil Felix letters it.

MV If Tony is not going to be staying at Stark Enterprises, where is he going to be?

TK Tony will be living on campus like most normal students, but he'll retain a secret laboratory at Avengers Mansion where he'll continue his scientific experimentation and passion for inventing. This will essentially be his secret identity thing. Tony is going to find it harder and harder to drop in and out of a super hero headquarters while trying to maintain the illusion of a "regular Joe" to his friends. This could get him into some sticky situations. I also find it weird that Tony will have to be sneaking in and out of Avengers Mansion. (Avengers Mansion was the Stark family home.-Tim)

MV What about the rest of IRON MAN's supporting cast now that the status quo has been so drastically changed?

TK Don't expect everybody to disappear. Happy and Pepper Hogan will be staying on, perhaps in parental roles. Masque will stay around, in some form or another (literally). And War Machine—Rhodey—might return to the series. Bethany Cabe will serve as the executor of the older Tony's will and act as young Tony's financial benefactor. She's in the know about the whole situation. Which might prove interesting, considering that the man Bethany once deeply loved is now almost half her age!

MV How about the other Avengers?

TK Since Tony will be in and out of Avengers Mansion just about every day, expect to see Cap and all the others. Jarvis the butler, who's known Tony since he was a child, will play a pivotal role in young Tony's life. He'll be delighted at the sudden return to life of his young master, and then be dismayed at his being whisked away to college. This will prove difficult for Tony's faithful servant and friend. Hawkeye will also be around a lot, acting as a tutor of sorts when it comes down to the super hero aspect of Tony's character. It's a role reversal for these two, obviously.

MV And what about that aspect—the super hero business?

TK While Tony won't have any armor per se in the very beginning, he will be systematically building a new suit of armor over at Avengers Mansion. We'll see a glove or two first, then a chestplate, then the whole shebang! He will, however, be quite hesitant to use the armor at first. He's almost fearful of science now, after seeing the mayhem he created as an adult. He's afraid of following in his own footsteps. But he will rise to the challenge when needed.

MV Which brings us to the next topic—villains.

TK Just because Tony won't be in the armor all the time doesn't mean IRON MAN won't be without its usual cast of bad guys. A new villain named Frost (a variation on Blizzard) will be appearing first and then later on, expect to see an exciting line-up of both old and new villains. But mainly new ones.

MV Should we rule out the possibility of a Mandarin story?

TK Definitely not.

MV What should we expect in the future from IRON MAN?

TK Expect a mixture of super heroics with the odyssey of a young man out of time trying to adjust to the situation. It will be the spirit of both adventure and fun with the drama of youth reintroduced to the title.

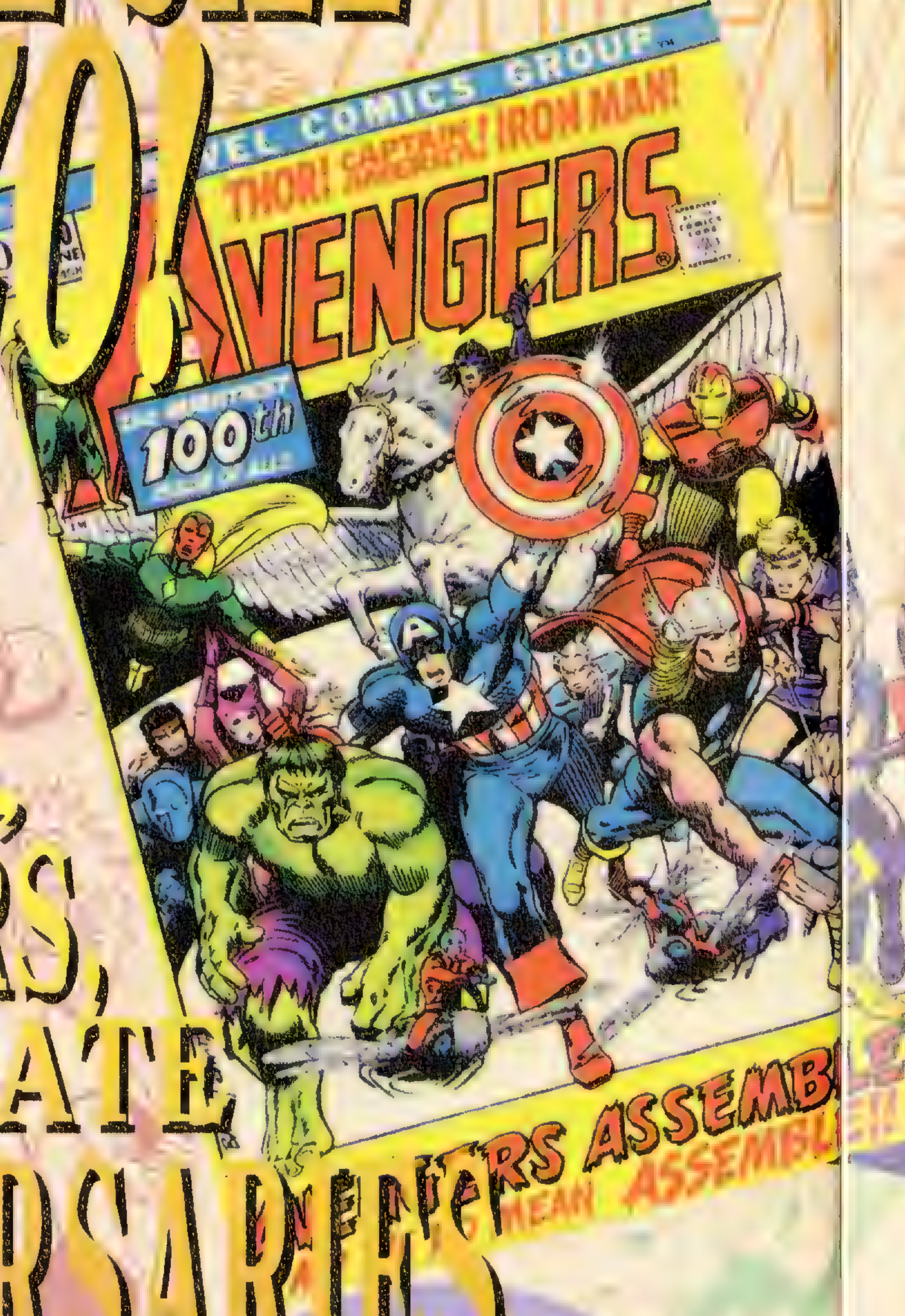
—Mike Marts

heavy mettle

Marvel Vision #5 feature by Polly Watson

DOUBLE-SIZE GONZO!

THOR, AVENGERS, CELEBRATE ANNIVERSARIES IN RAGIN' STYLE!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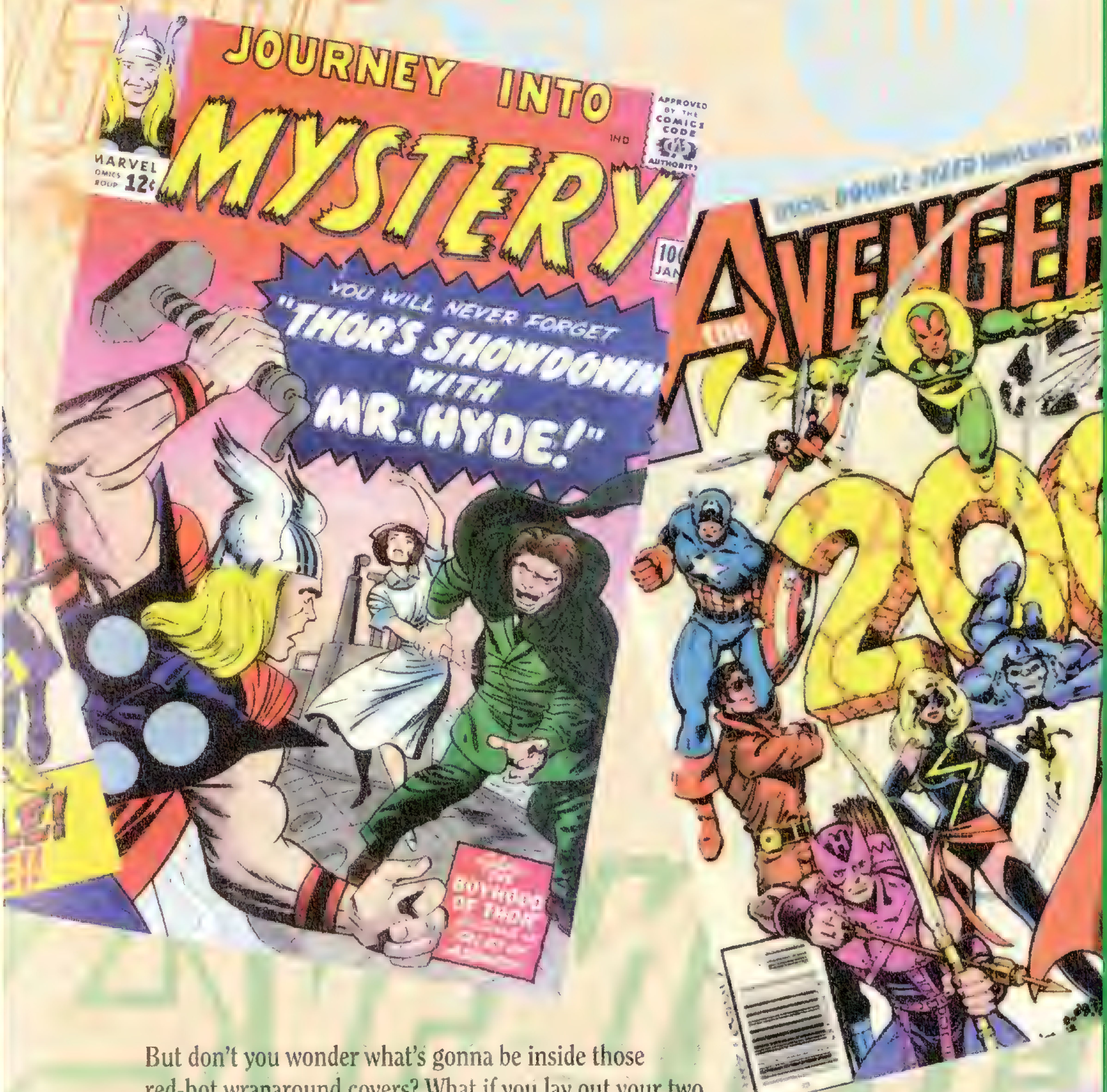
AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!
I MEAN ASSEMBLE!!

HEY TRUE BELIEVER! Live up to your name and believe us when we tell you that May is gonna be the best month ever for Marvel Hero fans! That's when you can look for two double-sized anniversary issues featuring your favorite heroes to hit the stands! Yep, when you reach the comic shop you'll find the Avengers looking back at you from the cover of their 400th issue, and the mighty Thor will be swinging his hammer wide to avoid that big "#500" printed on the cover!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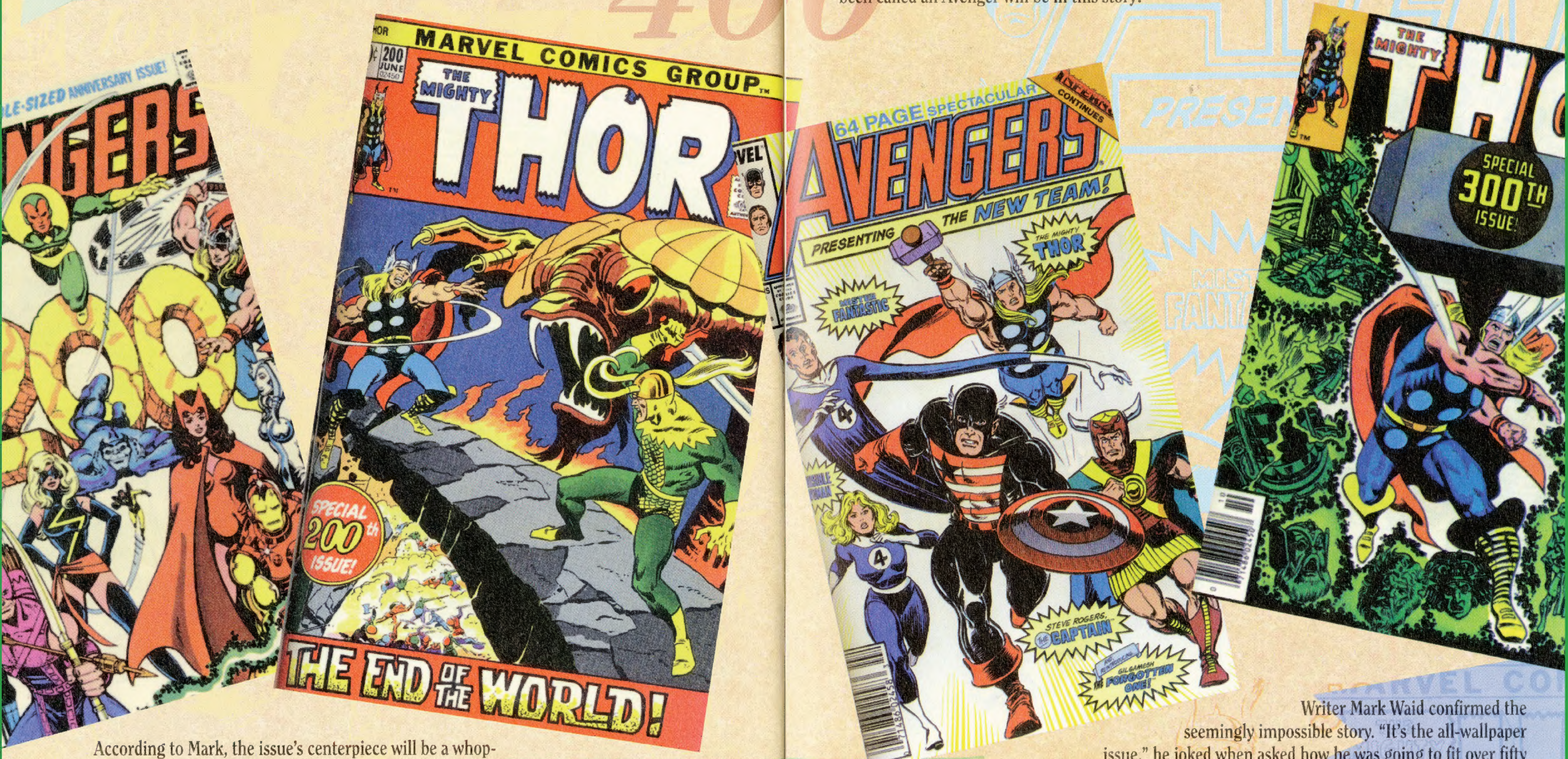
DOUBLE-SIZED ANNIVERSARY ISSUE
AVENGERS
200

But don't you wonder what's gonna be inside those red-hot wraparound covers? What if you lay out your two clams fifty and get home to find out that AVENGERS #400 contains 48 pages of the Black Widow mending a rip in her costume? Or what if Thor spends his 500th issue blow-drying his hair and using Mjolnir to hang pictures around the house? Don't worry, it's not gonna happen to you, because you read Marvel VISION, and we go straight to the horse's mouth every time!

"I was around for issue #200, I edited issue #300, and now I'm back to edit issue #400. Am I old, or am I just lucky?" When confronted with prying questions as to the contents of AVENGERS #400, lucky old editor Mark Gruenwald responded by cramming himself into the third-grader-sized chair-and-desk set that he keeps in his office (for special occasions?) and spilling the beans, as they say in Spain, *con gusto*.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MISTER FANTASTIC
INVISIBLE WOMAN
STEVE ROGERS, THE CAPTAIN
GILGAMESH THE FORGOTTEN ONE!
THE MIGHTY
THO
SPECIAL 300TH ISSUE!

According to Mark, the issue's centerpiece will be a whopping 30-plus-page story by regular writer Mark Waid. This story will be penciled by Mike Wieringo (special treat, campers!) and inked by honorary Avenger Tom Palmer. The issue will also feature a membership chart giving details on the fifty-plus super heroes who have belonged to the Avengers at one time or another!

"If this were a record, it would be *'The Avengers' Greatest Hits,'*"

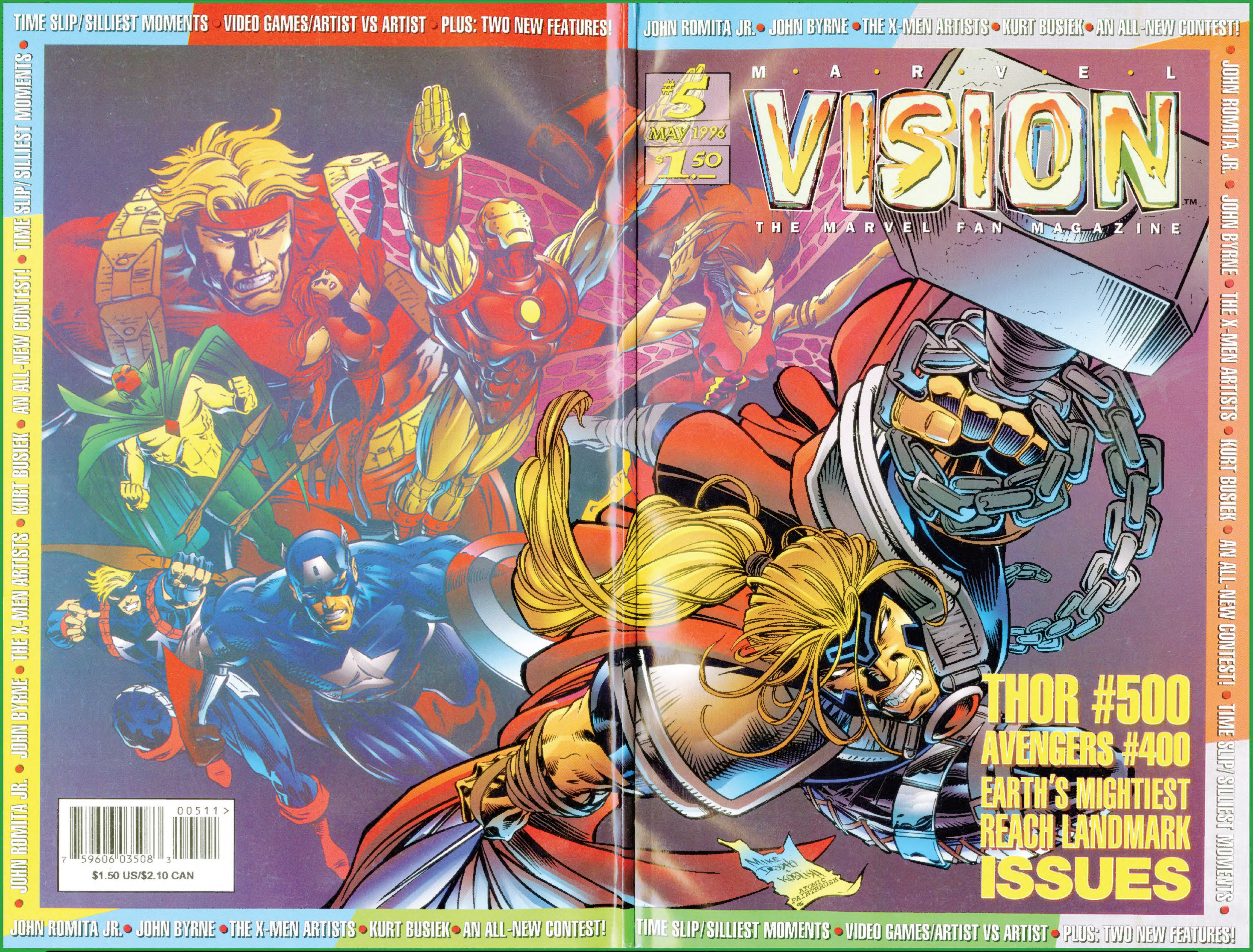
If your brain hasn't already turned to JELLO from all the excitement, get a load of the main plot! The story revolves around a time-traveller who comes back to the present to witness what history records as the last Avengers' adventure ever. Upon this man's return, the Avengers are suddenly attacked by manifestations of their own harrowing past adventures!

"If this were a record, it would be 'The Avengers' Greatest Hits,' says Gruenwald, struggling to describe the overwhelming spectacle. "We *guarantee* that anyone who has ever been called an Avenger will be in this story!"

Writer Mark Waid confirmed the seemingly impossible story. "It's the all-wallpaper issue," he joked when asked how he was going to fit over fifty Avengers into one story. "And don't forget, there's going to be ghosts of the past coming up to beat the baloney out of the current team...we're talking about a hundred villains here!" Or maybe a hundred and one: as issue #400 unravels, the time-traveller proves to be a gentleman of mysterious origin. Will he ultimately be revealed as the key to the Avengers' salvation, or the instrument of their destruction?

Speaking of instruments of destruction, those will figure highly as wielded by trolls and frost giants in the battle-scarred THOR #500! This 48-page issue breaks down like a paper factory before a bonfire!

Marvel Vision #5 cover art by Mike Deodato Jr., Scott Koblish & Atomic Paintbrush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